

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I have the duty to present a petition on behalf of the people of Cypress Hills. It concerns the EMS (emergency medical services) development project and the implications arising out of that for the people of that area.

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 not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and to affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by people from the community of Gull Lake, Hazlet, and Webb — all in the Cypress Hills constituency.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the conversion of paved highways to gravel.

And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to set aside any plans to revert Saskatchewan highways back to gravel, commit that the government will not download responsibility for current numbered highways onto local governments, and to consult with local residents, and to co-operate in finding and implementing other alternatives.

And the petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Briercrest, Moose Jaw, Hearne, and Claybank.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of people concerned about the state of the hospital in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to carefully consider Swift Current's request for a new hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from the city of Swift Current, from Stewart Valley, from Shaunavon, from Wymark, and from Mankota.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens in southern Saskatchewan who are concerned about their ambulance service. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And the petition is signed by residents of Gladmar, Lake Alma, Goodwater, and Ceylon.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I today also rise with a petition to stop further cuts at Assiniboia Pioneer Lodge. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that, at the very least, current levels of services and care are maintained at Pioneer Lodge in Assiniboia.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, these are from throughout the whole constituency of Wood River, including Assiniboia, Mazonod, LaFleche, Rockglen, Glentworth, Willow Bunch, Shaunavon, Flintoft, and Limerick.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received. These are petitions of citizens of the province on the following matters:

The centralization of ambulance services;

Swift Current's request for a new hospital;

Plans to revert highways to gravel; and

The level of services and care at Pioneer Lodge in Assiniboia.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Northern Affairs: how many times has the Northern Forestry Strategy Committee met, and what was the per diem paid to each individual committee member.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Liquor and Gaming Authority: for each of the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, and for each of the provincial electoral constituencies outside these four cities, how many video lottery terminals are in each; how much revenue and net income did the government collect from video lottery terminals in each during the 2000-2001 fiscal year; how much of this video lottery terminal revenue went back into each, through grants to organizations during the 2000-2001 fiscal year; and how many people from each attended gambling addiction counselling?

Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation: what are the details of all out-of-province investments made by CIC or any of its Crown subsidiaries?

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Sask Water: does the Saskatchewan Valley Potato Corporation send shipments of potatoes to Prince Edward Island; was a shipment recently returned due to freezing; if so, when was this shipment sent and when was the freezing discovered; to whom was the shipment sent; what was the value of this potato shipment upon leaving Saskatchewan; how much will the Saskatchewan Valley Potato Corporation lose on this transaction?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, a group of students. There are 33 of them sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and they are immigrants and refugees that study in the English language program of the Saskatoon Open Door Society and they're learning English.

And the Saskatoon Open Door Society, I might say, Mr. Speaker, is a non-profit organization in Saskatoon that exists to welcome and assist refugees and immigrants to become informed and effective participants in Canadian society, and to integrate them into the Saskatoon community where I and my colleagues from Saskatoon certainly are happy to have them.

And I want to just remind all of us, Mr. Speaker, that the motto of our province — and it appears several times in this room — is, translated into English: "from many peoples, strength". And

that is the strength of Canada and Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that we have people from so many places. And every time an immigrant comes to Saskatchewan and Canada, it makes us a little bit richer and a little bit stronger.

And so we want to welcome the students here today and also, Mr. Speaker, their teachers, Don Campbell and Donna Zaleschuk; and also Bob McNaughton is here, a volunteer. And I hope I haven't missed anyone. And I'd ask all members to join with me welcoming the students here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to echo the words of the Minister of Finance and welcome the group from the Saskatchewan Open Door Society here, to the chambers today.

They do just some outstanding work throughout the province and, I know, in Saskatoon. So from this side of the House also, we'd like to give you a hearty welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to the Legislative Assembly a group of five agricultural specialists from Mongolia who are spending the next four weeks in our province and who will be here until April 12. Our guests, Mr. Speaker, are seated in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, this group of agrologists is visiting Saskatchewan and studying zero and minimal tillage practices and chemical weed control at the University of Saskatchewan and at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Arts and Technology. They're studying in Saskatchewan because Mongolia and Saskatchewan are similar in climate and topography.

The group's Canadian study tour is sponsored under the Canada-Mongolia Zero-and-Minimum-Tillage Training Project which is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, and executed in a partnership between Alberta and Saskatchewan companies.

The project is facilitating the introduction of Saskatchewan agricultural technologies and practices, proving once again that our agricultural industry is at the leading edge of technology development and implementation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce the individuals and ask them to rise as I do, and you'll have to forgive me with some of the pronunciation.

Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Mr. T. Sukhbaatar, who is the director of Tisi Agrosant Company Limited; Mrs. B. Sanjaakhand, vice-director of Urgatsiin Undraa Company Limited; Mrs. C. Narankhuu, executive director of Altan Boroo Company Limited; Ms. C. Delgermaa, agronomist-manager of the Mongolian Farmers and Flour Producers Association; and Mr. T. Turmandakh, agricultural consultant with Monconsult.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce Ms. Verna Mitura of Regina, president and senior economist with Mitura Economic Research Incorporated; and Augustine Ebinu from the Sask

Trade & Export Partnership, who are accompanying the group this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all the members to join me in welcoming our friends to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Minister of Agriculture on behalf of the official opposition and welcome as well the guests from Mongolia, the Ag specialists who are looking at zero tillage and a number of other practices in Saskatchewan.

Many of the members on this side of the House have direct experience with zero tillage and conservation methods, being involved in the agriculture field as we are. And you would also know that in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan has a reputation for being leaders in the whole area of dryland farming on a worldwide scale. So we certainly do have a lot of information that we can provide to the guests.

And I want to take the opportunity to welcome them, and good luck in your trip here to Saskatchewan, and we wish you the very best. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, Sylvia Quiring, who's sitting in your west gallery. Sylvia is my constituency assistant and does a remarkable job of looking after me and making sure I'm at my appointments on time.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you along with many of my colleagues will reassure her that looking after me is a full-time job. I ask all members to offer a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour today to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly, 19 students sitting in the east gallery. The students are grade 7 and 8 students from the Viscount Central School in Viscount and they're accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Jamie White.

It's an honour to have you here today. I'm glad you made it through this snow and I'm looking forward to meeting with you later. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Cancer Survivor Leads Relay for Life

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I proudly rise in this Assembly today to give well-deserved recognition to Tristin Vincente from my hometown of Bladworth. He's also my next-door neighbour.

This remarkable 10-year-old boy is a cancer survivor. Tristin

yesterday in Saskatoon had the honour of being captain of the first team registered for the relay for life. This relay is to be held June 1 and 2 at Griffith's Stadium. This event raises money to help the Canadian Cancer Society support cancer patients.

Tristin's mother, Carol Vincente, said that when he first heard about it, the first thing Tristin said, he had to put a team in. She said her family is so grateful that things have turned out so well for Tristin. She adds that Tristin having cancer has showed them how to really appreciate life, to always have hope.

Mr. Speaker, I've been good friends with the Vincente family for years and I am very proud of Tristin and his remarkable efforts on behalf of our kids who are presently stricken with cancer.

I wish Tristin the very best in the upcoming Relay for Life and hope that everything goes well for him in the future. Today we honour the courage of this young man and his mission.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

20th Anniversary of Saskatoon Open Door Society

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, it is a truism that Canada is a nation of immigrants. For most of us we need only to go back two or three generations to find, as the Old Testament said:

The heart of a stranger in a strange land.

Because of this basic fact of our national and provincial character, I was very happy to attend a significant anniversary celebration last Saturday at Aden Bowman Collegiate in my constituency of Saskatoon Eastview.

The celebration was in honour of the 20th anniversary of the Saskatoon Open Door Society. Our Premier officially kicked off the festivities and the day gave the Open Door Society the opportunity to make its very valuable work known to the public which might not otherwise be aware of what it does. It also was a chance to sample some exceptional food and witness some good entertainment.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Open Door Society serves 1,500 newcomers to Canada every year and has approximately 300 clients at any given time. This includes settlement services to 200 government-sponsored refugees annually.

The Society has five program areas: reception and outreach, employment, volunteer development, language training, and children's programming. The role of the Open Door Society is to make newcomers Canadian, a role it performs effectively and with dignity.

I am proud that our government provides funding for the Saskatoon Open Door Society. And I congratulate executive director, Dawn Martin, and her dedicated staff for their ongoing work. And welcome all members and staff to the Leg.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial High School Wrestling Bronze Medallist

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Melfort's Theresa Lynn competed in the provincial high school wrestling meet on March 23 and 24 in Regina.

As this was Theresa's first competition at the high school level, her goal was to place in the top six. Theresa exceeded her expectations by bringing home the bronze medal and is now preparing for the Canadian Amateur Wrestling Association Championship, April 5 to 7 in Saskatoon.

We applaud Theresa for her achievement. Mr. Speaker. Please join with me today in congratulating this young woman and wishing her success as one of the representatives of our province on the national level.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CommunityNet

Mr. Adley: — The province of Saskatchewan is strong, Mr. Speaker, and this budget is a great example of that strength. It is essential that our province embrace the technology of the future to lead Canada and the world along the superhighway of success.

Future, Mr. Speaker, is a word seemingly shunned by the opposition. It appears the members opposite are content with looking into the past with no real regard for the future of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, the members on this side of the House are looking into the future and listening to the people of this province. And they're telling us they see a Saskatchewan that is plugged in, embracing technology and ensuring that its citizens have the tools they need to thrive in the global economy. This all begins with our youth, and therefore with the CommunityNet program, Mr. Speaker.

CommunityNet will be Saskatchewan's newly paved, smooth on-ramp to the information highway. This program will, more than anything else, connect our education system to the future, opening doors of learning and opportunity never before available to our students. I am proud of this government and its commitment to looking into the future, making Saskatchewan an even better place to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Saskatchewan Junior Achievement Awards

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. Last week was the Northern Saskatchewan Junior Achievement awards and I'm pleased to inform hon. members that the North Battleford junior achievers' company called Grassroots was named company of the year.

David Savill, a grade 12 student at North Battleford Comprehensive High School won the Most Valuable VP of Marketing Award.

Mr. Speaker, this is the third year running that the North Battleford company has won this award. The program is

providing valuable experience in education and entrepreneurship for young people.

The skills they are learning are our best guarantee of a bright future for them and for all of our province as a vibrant place to live and work.

Congratulations to the winners and to the North Battleford Rotary Club for sponsoring this worthwhile event.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Expansion of 911 Service

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More good news for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Or let me rephrase that. More good news for Saskatchewan people who can read, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes that's a very important distinction.

It was reported this morning on the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) that as of next week another part of this province is set to join the 911 network. Already enhanced 911 service is provided to 60 per cent of all land-line telephones in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And our province will be totally covered by the end of next year.

The part of the province to be covered next week, 104 municipalities in the southeast, including Weyburn and Estevan. Let's see, Mr. Speaker, next week. And next year, Mr. Speaker, I believe those qualify as deadlines, Mr. Speaker, I believe even the members opposite could understand that. And I say for those who can read, they would have known that.

Something else, Mr. Speaker. Notice I said 60 per cent of all land-line phones. The 911 system is a land-line system, not a cellphone system, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that if you dial 911 on a cellphone you will be bounced to the nearest cell tower, whether it be in Regina, Weyburn, or Scobey, Montana. Then your call will be routed to the nearest emergency service provider.

Good news, Mr. Speaker, and from this side of the House, accurate information, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Caronport Hockey Team Off to Kazakhstan

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Caronport Midget A Cougars will be leaving Thursday for an international hockey tournament in Kazakhstan. This Cougar team of 19 players, along with coach Jim Magee, assistant coach Barret Kropf, and manager Paul Nicholson, will be attending this tournament in celebration of 10 years independence for Kazakhstan.

Mr. Kropf helped organize the tournament and signed an agreement for a reciprocal tournament with Golf Stream and Hockey Ministries International when time and resources allow.

This is the first tournament of its kind. This tournament is also supported by the NHL Players Association goals and dreams fund to sponsor, along with the Caronport Cougars, at least 50

disadvantaged children in Kazakhstan.

We wish the Cougars well in this endeavour and all that organized the tournament. And I'm sure all the members will agree that this will be a great learning experience for them as well as a sporting experience.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Rural Entrepreneurs

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday this Assembly heard good news about the growth of small-town Saskatchewan and how people of those small towns are creating jobs in manufacturing, in construction, in mining, and in petroleum. This is proof that the entrepreneurial spirit of rural Saskatchewan's people continues to flourish and continues to create opportunities for many small communities.

And one of our Saskatchewan residents has decided to celebrate the many successes of our rural entrepreneurs. A new book chronicling the achievements of 18 of Saskatchewan's rural businesses was recently published. The author of the book, Al Scholz, profiled businesses that not only survived the downturn in agricultural sector but generated wealth.

Scholz includes a diverse group of businesses, proving just how successful Saskatchewan people are at creating new and innovative economic opportunities. This book is a testament to those achievements.

Scholz's book is appropriately titled *Don't Turn Out the Lights*. Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has confidence in the people of rural Saskatchewan and we won't turn out the lights and we won't double the cost like Alberta did. We will continue to support our rural entrepreneurs.

And I ask that all members of the Assembly join with me in congratulating both Al Scholz and all the rural entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan. Their contributions to our province will continue to be encouraged and supported. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Open and Accountable Government Questioned

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues in this Assembly an example of this so-called open and accountable government. Mr. Speaker, a written question was put forth to this NDP government on Monday, March 26 — a question that all residents of Saskatchewan are entitled to ask. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this question was indeed brought forward on behalf of all the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately on Monday, April 2, the good citizens of Saskatchewan found out just how open and accountable this NDP government is. An NDP government that has a great deal of discomfort when they have to tell the taxpayers of this province about its inside workings.

Mr. Speaker, every citizen of this great province has the right in a democratic society to have access to its government — a

government the people elected. Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers of this province also have the right to know how this NDP government is using monies collected from families across Saskatchewan.

We hear the members opposite spout off on openness and accountability. Well, Mr. Speaker, we now know just how open and accountable this NDP government has become.

This government is about secrecy, and that is unfortunate. If this NDP administration is so hush-hush about one small detail, the question, Mr. Speaker, is: what else is this NDP government hiding from Saskatchewan taxpayers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Funding for Municipal Governments

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Government. Mr. Speaker, the mayors of Saskatchewan cities spent most of last Friday blasting the NDP's budget. Here's part of what municipal leaders said about the NDP's treatment of cities, and I quote:

Six mayors of major Saskatchewan cities angrily denounced the Calvert coalition government's budget.

Mr. Speaker, normally the minister would have to go to a Liberal convention to find rejection like that.

The mayors say the minister is ignoring their interests. Most mayors are saying that a property tax increase was almost unavoidable, thanks to the NDP's budget.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Minister of Municipal Government supporting an NDP budget that ignores cities and towns and villages while driving property taxes up, at the same time making government larger?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member opposite. And I will agree that while our unconditional revenue-sharing transfers have remained stable in the last few years with municipalities, we have consulted with them as to what their priorities are, Mr. Speaker. And I outlined them yesterday.

But I just want to remind the member opposite that in addition to those transfers of funds there are numerous other programs for targeted projects that the government has participated in and helped to fund. For example, North Battleford has had funding from various programs to help enhance their transit for disabled services.

Centenary Fund: this is happening in all the communities throughout this province, Mr. Speaker, and I could go on and on and list all the good things that are happening.

One thing that's not happening is people out there are not

trash-talking Saskatchewan like the opposition. They're saying this is a great place to live.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the funds that the minister is talking about today is just another example of where that government gets to pick and choose winners. We're talking about funding for every municipality in this province.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Saskatchewan Party moved an amendment to the budget that would allow municipalities to hold the line on property tax hikes this year. We are proposing to increase municipal revenue-sharing grants by \$30 million.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Melville doesn't have to support a property tax increase for his constituents. The member from Melville may be outnumbered in the NDP (New Democratic Party) cabinet but he's not outnumbered in the legislature.

If the Liberal MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) — both of them — supported the Saskatchewan Party amendment, we could stop the NDP's plan to pay for hirings of 570 new government employees and, by that, driving up property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Municipal Government do the right thing? Will he vote against the NDP's plan to drive up property taxes as much as \$30 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I really can't understand why there's so much negativism on the other side of this House.

Mr. Speaker, picking winners and losers? I can't believe that. I have the list of . . . It's not winners and losers, Mr. Speaker. Every community in this province is benefiting from the money that the provincial government has been putting into municipal infrastructure until the federal government now has agreed to participate and will even put in more money into the various programs that include communities like Estevan, Humboldt, Lloydminster, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Melfort, Maple Creek, Shaunavon, Vibank.

Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of communities that do benefit by the participation of this government's injection of monies into those communities under various programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if that minister wants to hear negative talk, he only has to go back to Melville. He'll hear all the negative talk he wants to hear.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister of Municipal Government doesn't understand the question. Maybe he just doesn't get it. He doesn't have to go along with the NDP's budget to force property taxes up while growing the size of government. We don't need another 570 government workers and we certainly don't need another property tax increase.

Yesterday the Saskatchewan Party moved a motion that would stop the NDP from spending \$30 million to hire new government employees and instead use that money to increase revenue-sharing grants to municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister support the Saskatchewan Party's attempt to stop the NDP's property tax increase? Will he vote to increase municipal revenue-sharing grants in this budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I am truly disappointed that the members opposite would attack opportunities for people to work in this great province, into all the great communities we have throughout the province, Mr. Speaker.

Those employees . . . I wonder if the mayors and the leaders of all those communities would be happy to hear the members opposite say, we don't want those people working in your towns and your villages and your communities. Because that's where those people will be working, Mr. Speaker. On our highways and in my department, in one particular area, where we will have museum gallery guides. We will justify the good, hard work that those people will put into making sure that our communities are real good places to live.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote something from a great editorialist, Mr. Bob Hughes, who said in his article of March 22. He said:

Too many taxes in this province are always pointed to as the broom that is shooing people out of Saskatchewan and into Alberta. There is a mirage that in Alberta nobody has to pay taxes, that the very moment you cross the provincial border you become rich.

Well that's the trash talk that those members opposite are saying to the people in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that minister is disappointed, but I think he's disappointed in the influence that him and the Leader of the Third Party seem to have on that government's decisions.

Mr. Speaker, it's really pretty simple. On Friday we will vote on whether or not Saskatchewan taxpayers can afford another property tax increase. The Liberal MLA from Melville can continue his role as a puppet for the NDP and go along with the government's plan to increase property taxes or the minister can force the NDP to back off its property tax increase by supporting the Saskatchewan Party's budget motion. It's not a motion of confidence in the government; it's not a motion that will defeat the whole budget. It's simply a way of stopping the NDP from raising property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has a simple choice — will he support the NDP's property tax hike or will he support our motion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker. I want to once again remind

the member of the influence that the . . . my coalition partner and I have had on this particular budget, Mr. Speaker. And if the members opposite will recall that the Liberal members had promised to make an investment into roads, into highways, into tax cuts, and those influences have been felt and reflected in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

The taxes are being reduced and, Mr. Speaker, there will be some augmentation to municipalities with \$3.7 million to grants in lieu of tax programs. The government does support municipalities through the unconditional grants and the targeted programs, Mr. Speaker. And the people in the communities appreciate that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Additional Police Officers

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

In the 1999 election campaign the NDP made many promises to the people of Saskatchewan. But with each and every passing day people are realizing that there is no way many of these promises will be kept, and the NDP government is now admitting it.

They promised to hire 500 more health care providers; instead, they fired nurses. They promised to reduce waiting lists; instead, some of our surgical waiting lists have grown to be the very longest in the country.

And yesterday, just yesterday, the Finance minister admitted that the NDP's target to create 30,000 new jobs is unreachable. They must have included the 10,000 fictional forestry jobs in their original number.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: what excuse do you offer to the people of Saskatchewan for failing to deliver on these commitments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Just before I ask the Premier to respond, I'd ask members to phrase their questions through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Premier, we all remember the last provincial election campaign in Saskatchewan. And we all remember the commitments that were being made at that time.

We recall that the members opposite committed to freeze at the rate of inflation any new funding for health care in the province. What does this budget do, Mr. Speaker? Eleven per cent — is that not correct? — eleven per cent increase in health care funding. Now how can the Leader of the Opposition stand in this House criticizing this government for these kind of new resources to the programs that people want in the province of Saskatchewan. I don't understand how they can do this, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is

deflecting attention away from the matters that I'm bringing to his attention.

Mr. Speaker, another election promise that the NDP government is behind on is the promise to add 200 police officers to our RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and municipal police forces over four years. Last year the budget allowed for 25 new officers; this budget only adds another 20. That's not even a quarter of the commitment that the NDP government made.

Mr. Speaker, justice figures from Statistics Canada show that the provincial police officer numbers have decreased. High retirement rates and budget cuts have affected the numbers of police officers on the streets. But this government could help the situation by making good on their election promise.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: he is almost halfway through that four-year plan, why has he not committed more resources for police forces as he promised in the 1999 budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan must be amazed when they listen to the Leader of the Opposition on a daily basis, and his colleagues — amazed, Mr. Speaker.

We set goals and we achieve our goals, Mr. Speaker. We've set goals for this government and this term.

But note the contradiction, Mr. Speaker. When we provide new resources to provide men and women to go out and work on the roadways of Saskatchewan, what do they do? They criticize it. When we provide new resources in this budget to increase the number of social workers in our province working with the children at risk in our province, what do they do, Mr. Speaker? They criticize it. When we provide more resources to provide firefighters to fight the fires in the forests, we bring this budget in, what do they do? Criticize it.

Next thing they'll be criticizing us for the new resources that we're putting into police services across the province. Unbelievable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier is ducking the issues. He's not answering the questions. The NDP promised to put 200 more police on the streets in four years. This is a commitment that police forces across the province are planning on. They have to count on your word but your word's not been good.

They're looking ahead at their own operations, their own retirement rates, and they're making their own project and budget plans. And they're expecting help from your government but they are learning, as are the people of Saskatchewan that this is a government that is not true to its word. This government is breaking its election promises on waiting lists, on jobs, on access to health services, on taxes, and yes, now on policing.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: when and how does he intend to add another 155 police officers to keep the promise that he and his government made to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I repeat: this government sets goals, this government achieves goals.

What is so interesting about the Leader of the Opposition and his party, somehow social workers being brought aboard to work with at-risk children, highways workers being brought on to patch the highways, health care workers, forest fires — these are all, somehow, in his language, bureaucrats.

But now he's saying, now he's saying, that the police officers of the province are not civil servants, are not public servants. Of course they are, Mr. Speaker. And the next thing, next thing you know he'll be calling them bureaucrats, Mr. Speaker.

We're not about to take our advice, Mr. Speaker, on building Saskatchewan from a party that does nothing but bring this province down, preaches doom and gloom all the time. This is a government, this is a party that believes in Saskatchewan and we're working with Saskatchewan people to build Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Workers' Compensation Board

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I asked the government a written question about the January dismissals of four management employees of the Workers' Compensation Board. A few days ago I received the response of the minister who said, WCB is an arm's-length, independent body of the government and the question should be directed to them. However when the media recently asked the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) about the reasons for the terminations, they refused to comment.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is close enough to WCB to have recently paid \$150,000 in severance to CEO (Chief Executive Officer) John Cameron upon his resignation. Is it just a coincidence that shortly before Mr. Cameron's departure, four other top executives were fired?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour must regularly be briefed on the going ons, going on in the Workers' Compensation Board. Why were these four people terminated from their management positions, and did they receive severance packages?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the member opposite's edification, it's Stan Cameron, not John Cameron. You might want to get some facts a little more accurate.

The fact of this situation, Mr. Speaker, is the Workers' Compensation Board is a well-operating . . . well-operating machine, if I can describe it that way, that provides

compensation to injured workers and it provides protection against lawsuit to employers. It is run at an arm's-length distance from the minister, Mr. Speaker, as it should be. And I'm delighted with their actions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister has just confirmed there's one set of rules for the government's friends, and another set for the rest of people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, an internal memo to all WCB staff dated January 31 states, and I quote:

Our decision to end employment in these instances were made in the interests of the soundest future for the entire organization.

It goes on to say:

We were guided in our actions by the values that were chosen by all of us for our organization.

Mr. Speaker, these people held the positions of manager of financial resources, benefits and compensation administrator, director of client services, and unit manager.

Mr. Speaker, how is it that four people in management positions of this level are all released on the same day just weeks before the CEO left the organization? And why did these people compromise the sound future of WCB?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, it is true that there are four management people that left the Workers' Compensation Board. What just astounds me is the members opposite and their continual attack of civil servants, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is civil servants work for this administration. Some of them are working in Workers' Compensation. Civil servants sometimes leave the employ of government. It is not right for government to be commenting on potential severance that civil servants may have received. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to add in this instance the severance, I can assure you, is within the normal realm of what is the standard of the industry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, last year the NDP government hired industrial relations consultant, Jim Dorsey, to review the policies of the Workers' Compensation Board. The review was supposed to be released months ago, but either the government has put it on a shelf to collect dust or the minister is deliberately withholding it from the public.

It's very suspicious, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP has had the Dorsey report for months now, a report reviewing the operations of WCB, and in the meantime, CEO and four other management officials have either left or been terminated.

What is the Minister of Labour hiding? He won't answer a written question and he's delayed the release of the Dorsey report.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Labour, why are you withholding the release of the Dorsey report and will you table it in the legislature immediately?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would ask the member also to phrase his questions to the Chair, through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the members opposite don't realize, Mr. Speaker, is that the Workers' Compensation Board properly adjudicates and handles more than 36,000 claims of injured workers last year — more than 36,000.

The Workers' Compensation Board is always looking for ways to improve their service delivery.

With respect to the question about the Dorsey report, I'm delighted to say it's in my possession. I'm delighted to say it's a good report, and it is in the process and will be tabled in due course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Safety Net Options

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, despite all the tough talk from the Minister of Agriculture, he has now done a complete about-face and signed on to CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program). The minister huffed and puffed and then he caved right in.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that CFIP is a terribly flawed program, but maybe the minister could have gotten a better deal for Saskatchewan if he had actually put forward an option on the table before the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) didn't work and CFIP won't work any better. But right now, that's the only program there is because the NDP has not come up with any alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the minister to tell us what alternative safety net options did he propose on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know and the member opposite knows, that for several months this government had been saying that we need to redesign the Canadian Farm Income Program. We've said that all along.

And for the last six or seven months the member opposite, the agriculture critic, and the entire Saskatchewan Party have been absent for any agricultural debate. Don't see them anywhere

with farm organizations. Don't see them speaking with farm groups. Don't see them with farmers, and we don't see them talking to Mr. Stockwell Day either, whom they supported.

Mr. Speaker, that group of men and women over there are bankrupt of ideas for Saskatchewan farmers, are bankrupt of ideas, Mr. Speaker, of helping the Saskatchewan rural communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government is about helping Saskatchewan farmers. This government has just invested 85 million more dollars for safety net programs in this province, for conversion programs, and . . . (inaudible) . . . for transition programs because we're about Saskatchewan agriculture and farmers. And you abdicated that responsibility fully.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would also ask ministers in their responses to direct all remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the minister clearly has no new ideas in agriculture or he would have put them forward. But he does have a Farm Safety Net Committee that he set up a number of years ago. The committee has met six times in the last three years at an average cost of over \$10,000 per meeting. That's about \$60,000 for six meetings, and what the NDP have to show for it? Absolutely nothing. No new ideas, no new proposals for a better safety net, and no choice but to sign on to a flawed program that doesn't work for Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Speaker, the Farm Safety Net Committee has held six meetings in the last three years. What recommendations have they made to the minister and what has he done with those recommendations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to the member opposite that in the last six months I've met with the Farm Safety Net Committee on three occasions. Just last Friday is the last time that I met with the Farm Safety Net Review Committee.

And the Farm Safety Net Review Committee has said to me what I've said to the member opposite: we should not be in CFIP. We should not be signing this agreement — we should not be signing this agreement, Mr. Speaker.

However, they have said we don't have any choice. We don't have any choice, Mr. Speaker, because we don't have the money that we would get through the Canada/Saskatchewan assistance program. That's why in fact, Mr. Speaker, we signed the agreement.

And what do the members opposite put forward? That they want to get on an airplane or on a bus or on a train and 58 of us are going to go to Ottawa and we're going to try and lobby the federal government for additional money, Mr. Speaker. That's their intention of what they want to do.

Well I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that taking 29 members from that side to Ottawa to lobby for farm support programs is about as helpful as taking a hand grenade to a firing squad.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 213 — The Recall of Members of the Legislative Assembly Act

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move first reading of Bill No. 213, The Recall of Members of the Legislative Assembly Act.

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave of the House to make a ministerial statement.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted to revert back to ministerial statements?

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Measures to Control Foot and Mouth Disease

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the leave.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House this afternoon to address the issue of foot and mouth disease. As we're all aware, well aware, this highly contagious disease has struck Great Britain, Ireland, Europe, with devastating consequences.

Mr. Speaker, the livestock industry in Saskatchewan is very important to our economy and to our province. Saskatchewan livestock producers are concerned about the transmission of disease to North America, Canada, and to Saskatchewan.

Foot and mouth disease is a highly communicable viral disease. The virus can be transported by footwear and on clothing. It can be transported in the human nasal passage and it can be transported in the food products such as meat and cheese.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is working in co-operation with the Canada Food Inspection Agency or CFIA of the federal government in an effort to prevent the transmission of foot and mouth disease to this province. Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food is assisting with the dissemination of information to producers, travellers, and to the public.

The Government of Saskatchewan is also updating its Foreign Animal Disease Eradication Support or FADES. The support of FADES agreement is to identify the arrangements whereby federal, provincial, and local agencies will help the CFIA to eradicate the foreign animal disease outbreak in Saskatchewan. The FADES plan is intended to provide CFIA with the support it requires from federal, provincial, and municipal governments to ensure a coordinated efficient and effective eradication of an outbreak in Saskatchewan.

The effective eradication of foreign animal disease will require

co-operation of resources from all levels of government. Emergency Preparedness Canada and Emergency Planning Saskatchewan provide an organizational structure and arrangements for assistance and procedures to follow emergency operations. Emergency Planning Saskatchewan provides a prompt and coordinated response by the Government of Saskatchewan to emergency and disasters.

A meeting is currently being scheduled with producer organizations to talk about foot and mouth disease, and foreign animal disease preparedness. Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food and CFIA will present this information to Saskatchewan producer organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial veterinarian with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food's food safety and animal health unit is recommending that proper precautions must be taken for Saskatchewan residents returning from countries which are experiencing an outbreak, Saskatchewan producers or having foreign guests visiting their farms.

These precautions include: declaring all meat, dairy, and other animal products that you are bringing back to Canada. If you visit a farm while abroad, make sure that your clothing and footwear you wore during your visit is free from soil and manure, and clean and disinfect your footwear. Dry cleaning of the clothes is also recommended.

If you don't live on the farm, you should not visit a Saskatchewan farm for 14 days after returning to Canada. Livestock owners and producers are advised to exercise caution before admitting visitors onto their farms.

If visitors must come to the farm in Saskatchewan they should take additional sanitary precautions, such as washing and disinfecting all personal effects and equipment that have accompanied them. It is particularly important to clean and disinfect your footwear.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial veterinarian has advised the prevention of this disease reaching Canada and Saskatchewan is very much the responsibility of each individual who travels to Britain, Europe, and returns to Canada. I am told that some travellers on return to Canada from Britain and Europe are burning their shoes and refraining from visiting farms for a minimum of 14 days.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial veterinarian also says that it is the responsibility of Saskatchewan producers to be proactive in preventing this disease. Foot and mouth disease is epidemic in many countries of the world, including: India, China, parts of South America, Africa, and Asia. Therefore, it is important that farmers take the necessary precautions when having foreign guests visit their farms. We have successfully kept foot-and-mouth disease out of Canada for now almost 50 years.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association are reminding cattle producers that the risk of introducing foot-and-mouth disease into Canada is minimal as long as proper precautions are taken.

Mr. Carl Block, Chair of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, animal health committee, has said that the most important

precaution is for all of us to take the first . . . is to take the threat of this disease seriously and that visitors who represent Canada should not attempt to smuggle meat or other agricultural products into Canada.

Mr. Speaker, some Saskatchewan high school students in rural communities have already cancelled their Easter vacation trips to Britain and to Europe. We know these students must feel extremely disappointed. We know they planned their trips and saved their money and they worked hard over the last two or three years to advance their tours. To these young people let me say I admire your dedication to your communities and to your families. I admire your sense of responsibility to the larger community, the province, and to our country.

Mr. Speaker, there is an old proverb that says; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I feel that that old adage is most important at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all residents of Saskatchewan to be vigilant in preventing the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — With leave, to respond to the minister's statement.

Leave granted.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we would like to join with the Minister of Agriculture on this very important issue, the issue of foot-and-mouth disease. This is a great concern to all livestock owners and should be of great concern to all people of Saskatchewan. And we are hearing from many of those folks in our constituencies who are livestock producers, with regard to the devastating effects a disease like that would have to the Canadian livestock and specifically the Saskatchewan livestock industry.

All of us have watched in horror I believe at the problems that are experiencing . . . they are experiencing in other countries around the world. I understand there are some 40 countries now that have been affected by this outbreak. Local people are paying attention to the concerns and we certainly appreciate that. And many precautions are being taken to avoid the outbreak here. This awareness is a good step.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, we have spoken recently to the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, their district office in Calgary, and they believe that a national public awareness campaign would certainly be a good first step in addressing some of the concerns that they have.

The next step is certainly to maintain the confidence that we have in the food, agriculture, environmental safety measures that Canada and our province have already in place. We have an internationally strong reputation for disease control in North America and we want to do everything we can to certainly maintain that.

There are literally billions and billions of dollars of commerce and trade at risk here and I don't think anyone can underestimate the concern in that regard. Canada does have some of the most stringent food safety livestock regulation environmental protection systems in the entire world, and we certainly can be thankful for that.

The awareness of this disease can help us, but more stringent methods may be necessary to ensure that we do not see this move into our country. There is government responsibility and there is certainly personal responsibility.

We support the livestock industry, and everyone certainly is aware of their concerns in this area.

Mr. Speaker, school groups, as the minister has said, have decided to withdraw from the opportunity to travel abroad in some cases. We believe that this is a precaution, and a very responsible precaution.

We also believe that any international traveller that may be contemplating trips in the next little while would want to take every precaution they possibly could to ensure that we don't see that here, in our country. There will be many individuals who will travel to Europe and not undergo the scrutiny that these school groups may be involved with right now.

We would certainly encourage the federal/provincial governments to make sure they communicate with the producer groups and the public at large to ensure the awareness of this highly infectious disease.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Great Britain has said recently, and it should be of note to us here, in Canada:

The foot-and-mouth outbreak only affects a small minority of the country directly. However, where it has struck, it has struck with a profound and disturbing impact on the communities concerned.

Britain is open to business. I would ask that the media, in reporting this important issue, not simply focus on those areas where the disease is rife but also to reflect accurately the fact that the vast majority of the country has no foot-and-mouth disease and that even in the worst affected areas, most tourist activity is ongoing.

So we certainly are of the belief and we would hope that all governments throughout the world are taking the necessary precautions.

The issue is most certainly of consumer confidence that we have to keep in mind in this area as well.

So our thoughts are joining with the minister this afternoon. Our thoughts are — and best wishes — are with the livestock producers of this province, and that all international travellers use the most available methods and precautions that they possibly can to ensure that we do not see something of this type in Canada

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE
(BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise today and support our eighth balanced budget. It's a privilege to rise and support the budget that is the first budget of our new Premier. And, Mr. Speaker, to rise today to speak against the amendment of the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I heard last evening from a member opposite that there is no vision, and we have no vision. I'm just wondering where they've been when they've heard all of the visionary statements put forward, first in the Throne Speech, and then in the budget. But just to refresh the memory of the members opposite, here's what our budget and our vision is about.

Our budget is about a vision of our province where all Saskatchewan people enjoy a high quality of life. Where we seize the future with confidence and a spirit of innovation, keeping Saskatchewan the great place it is to live, work, raise a family, and prosper.

That's our vision, Mr. Speaker, and the document clearly speaks to the ways that we'll go about doing that, first in a Throne Speech that outlines the vision statements and the values we will use to attain those, and then with the budget that now puts the meat to the bones, Mr. Speaker, so to speak.

The statement used most often is we're connecting to the future, putting our values to work to build our economy and our province and achieve our vision.

Just a few of the values that I wanted to state again, that clearly we have articulated on this side of the House first and foremost, would be the value of pride and a positive attitude in the province of Saskatchewan.

That has been achieved, Mr. Speaker, by continuing to utilize the values that are threaded throughout all of the work that we do on this side of the House. We do it in co-operation and in partnership.

So none of the work that you would see before you, Mr. Speaker, has come here by accident; it's come here after consultation or discussion with partners in community. And certainly many of the measures contemplate the values of co-operation that have put our province in leadership throughout this country.

Another value, Mr. Speaker, that you will see that we use on this side of the House through everything we do, would be the value of compassion. Mr. Speaker, it's not a caring that comes

with the two-tiered system of anything that's been proposed time and time again by the members opposite. It's not a we care if you can afford to pay your way, and we don't care if you're poor and you're outside the system, Mr. Speaker. It's not two-tiered compassion.

Everything we do on this side of the House is based on looking at those who are greatest in need in our communities, and trying to give them the same opportunities as everyone to bring themselves into programs and services that will lead them to be active members of the economy — not one for the rich and not one for the poor — a raising of everyone to the level where they're active participants in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

That leads us to the value of community. In everything we do, Mr. Speaker, from now the new office of Rural Revitalization to the initiatives in the budget that we'll be looking at throughout this province, helping to uplift community.

We've heard far too often the value expressed opposite is the value of division. Let's pit rural against urban. Let's pit one force in our community against the other and keep them fighting, and that way we'll be able to continue to tear down Saskatchewan and talk negatively, as these members do day after day after day in this House.

Laced through all of this, Mr. Speaker, is the value of fiscal prudence and responsibility. Now I thought about that and I said, well why would we want to say time and time again to people — and sometimes they're really tired of hearing of it, particularly in the members opposite, although they don't take a page out of that book — but why would we want to do that? Mr. Speaker, it's to protect the future of our children and our grandchildren. We don't practise fiscal responsibility today without the view of tomorrow.

So when you hear the members opposite stand up and say, as they have in the past in a right-wing philosophy kind of way and their value way — we don't care about debt, we don't care if we owe money to the banks; we'll hang the children of our future with mortgages to pay far into the future; we want it now. Mr. Speaker, that's not our philosophy. Our philosophy is a far-reaching, far-seeing view of our province well into the future and providing the stability for our children and their children.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — When I looked at the budget then, Mr. Speaker, in the eyes of someone who would want to stand and tell their constituents that their issues matter, I talked about — in the return speech, the Throne Speech — the number one issue that people talk about in my constituency would be taxes. And you know, I saw this raised in many constituencies in the recent days past.

First in Elphinstone, where people talked about, in Elphinstone, a certain member that was running for the party opposite was saying that Saskatchewan people have seen nothing new in the way of tax reductions from this government. Mr. Speaker, the people there didn't believe him because they've also heard year after year of the measures we've had in our budgets to reduce taxes and to target tax measures to spur the economy in certain

areas.

And I guess just to remind people here today and the people in my constituency, I wanted to run through a quick overview of May 1992 budget. Child tax reduction for low-income families increased 25 per cent to \$250 per child. The small-business corporation income tax rate was reduced from 10 per cent to 9 per cent. There was a phase-out announced of the E&H (education and health) tax on direct agents in manufacturing and processing to spur the economy on in that area, Mr. Speaker.

In March of '93 there was a further reduction of the business corporation income tax rate from 9 per cent to 8.5 per cent. There was a removing of the E&H tax from 1-800 telephone services. There was a manufacturing and processing tax credit equal to 8 per cent of the value of eligible equipment acquired by Saskatchewan small business, again to help our manufacturing and processing industry.

There was a further reduction in the E&H tax on direct agents used in manufacturing and processing from 5 per cent to 3 per cent. Takes us to 1994, when a direct agents E&H tax was totally eliminated, and we continued the reduction of the small-business corporate income tax rate to 8 per cent.

Now why were we continuing to work on the small-business corporate income tax rate, Mr. Speaker? Because anyone in my community would tell the members opposite that's a major engine to economic growth and development in this province. And so it's been a consistent value and a consistent vision that we would help that engine of our economy.

1995: finally balancing the budget for the first time. You can appreciate the stress and the strain that these members went through as members of government, being saddled with \$1 billion over-expenditure each and every year before we got here.

Now it takes a lot of work and a lot of talking with our communities, as I mentioned, in the values of partnership and co-operation to get to a balanced budget. And, Mr. Speaker, we thanked our communities for helping us to achieve that because that was our key to economic freedom for the future of this province.

Then there was a reduction of the fuel tax on aviation turbo fuel from 7 cents to 3.5 cents. That was on a trial basis for one year. And then for commercial and business purposes, 3.5 cents per litre.

There was a non-refundable 9 per cent investment tax credit to apply to capital purchase in support of manufacturing and processing activity in Saskatchewan. And it could be applied against a corporate income tax. There was a reduction in the corporate income tax rate for manufacturing and processing firms from 17 per cent to as low as 10 per cent.

There was the elimination of the deficit surtax for lower income earners, and the reduction of the surtax for others up to \$150 per taxpayer.

In 1996, again continuation of some of those measures. And we

announced the review of Saskatchewan's tax system for fairness and effectiveness with findings that would be announced for 1997.

1997: the reduction of the provincial sales tax from 9 per cent to 7 per cent. The extension of the PST (provincial sales tax) exemptions to include certain medical devices that were purchased by individuals, in addition to children's clothes and books. That was a gesture I really heard from people they appreciated, Mr. Speaker, particularly those in lower incomes who were raising their families, and had purchases for school and other things, Mr. Speaker. And continuing. Personal income tax cut of up to \$300 per family.

Now this theme is developing here. The members opposite say there's been no tax initiatives by this government; we haven't done anything to help people in the area of taxation, says the members opposite.

1998: Mr. Speaker, we balanced the budget in '94 and '95 and reduced taxes in every budget since, including 55 million per year income tax reduction introduced in '95.

We also fully implemented in 1996 the rate in taking 6,000 lower-income people off the tax rolls and benefiting all Saskatchewan taxpayers. We reduced the income tax rate from 50 per cent to 48 per cent of basic federal tax.

(14:45)

In 1999 we cut taxes for families, and every year since 1995 in a sustainable, affordable, responsible fashion. And in 1999 it was announced, another sustainable . . . Now this is a very important word when we talk about tax cuts, Mr. Speaker — sustainable — so that we could do them and they would continue in this province. Not just say, well we've given you something today, but we'll take it away tomorrow because, oops, we've done our voodoo mathematics and it doesn't make sense and we have to put it back.

There was a further benefit. As of midnight that night, they cut education and health tax from 7 per cent to 6 per cent. That was the lowest rate in 12 years, Mr. Speaker. That's 3 percentage points off the sales tax in three years. And that was \$300 million back in the hands of families, businesses, municipalities, educational institutions, school boards, and health boards, right across this province.

Now it was clear. The pattern is there, and it's very misleading and unfortunate that members opposite can't talk about the measures that have been taken in this province to have tax fairness, tax competitiveness, tax simplicity, and progressivity, Mr. Speaker.

So I wanted to compare that, compare what we've been doing in the area of taxes because most recently what we've said to the provincial taxpayers is that we would de-link from the federal system. We didn't hear that from the members opposite. We didn't say that they would want to de-link from the federal system. We didn't hear them say, let's adjust our own system to the circumstances of Saskatchewan. But we did that, Mr. Speaker, we de-linked from the federal system to address our own issues and our own initiatives.

We did that, not by consulting with people in Calgary, Mr. Speaker. We did that by consulting with communities and families and seniors and low-income people right across this province. The result — we have a system that is competitive, it's fair, it's progressive, and it's simple, Mr. Speaker. Consistently we supported strategic, economic sectors throughout our budget proposals and this budget is no different.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing about this budget that I really appreciate in the area of taxation is that we have now been able to incorporate professionals. In this budget, we will be recognizing the importance of attracting and retaining key personnel in our business and professional communities. I'm standing, Mr. Speaker, and supporting this budget because we will now permit all regulated professionals to incorporate their practices.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, another thing to note in this budget and talking about our tax system is that our tax reform measures will also include indexing to avoid bracket creep. And that's also a very important part of allowing for our measures to stay in place and to continue to be fair and progressive.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked about, in the past, removing 6,000 people who had crept into the system who could least afford to pay taxes in this province. In this budget and the measures that have been announced in our income tax system, we will remove 55,000 individuals from the tax rolls, Mr. Speaker.

I want people in this province to know what I've heard from the members opposite for tax measures. I've heard what others have said just in this House. The snake oil salesperson comes along and says, have we got a deal for you. The members opposite say, have we got a deal for you. We're going to cut taxes. We're going to increase services on the face of the earth — by the way, without any more employees — but we're going to increase all of those services. Don't know how they'll get done, but we'll increase those services. And you know what? All the while, the balanced budget will remain in place.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members in Elphinstone didn't believe that story. The members in Riversdale didn't believe the bulletin boards, Mr. Speaker. And in reality, when I was out on the streets in Riversdale and talking to people in Fairhaven, when the candidate of the party opposite came to their door and said the NDP has done nothing to reduce taxes in this province, you know, Mr. Speaker, they didn't believe them. And they also didn't believe them when they said they could do even more, Mr. Speaker.

And why? Because they promised a 20 per cent reduction in personal income tax and they said they would remove the gas tax, Mr. Speaker. Well I want to tell the members opposite that in Saskatchewan we remember what major tax cuts like that would do to programs and services in this province.

And even their own economist, Mr. Speaker, said you'd have to be very careful in what you're doing, because you would understand that if you reduce taxes in a flat measure like that, without any credits in place, without any of the kinds of things

that we've put into place, Mr. Speaker, even their own economist told them that their announcements or pronouncements that they could create jobs out of that tax cut and it would somehow cover the losses that they incur doing this, Mr. Speaker, would not come about.

In fact, the kinds of jobs they would have to create, Mr. Speaker, we know from economists across this country, cannot be done in this economic times. What does that mean? That means then, unemployment, Mr. Speaker — more people unemployed in this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not what we believe in on this side of the House. We believe in jobs and in growing the economy and a sustained tax reduction that makes sense for the people of the province.

Vision, Mr. Speaker? Well their snake oil tax reduction is not a vision. Tell me what your real goal is? Unemployment? Of course it is. Mr. Speaker, their tax reduction did not talk about some of the things that have been implemented here.

They did not talk about a universal child tax credit. During this fiscal year, we will put in place an increase to the child tax credit from \$1,500 per child to \$2,000 per child.

We have tax credits, Mr. Speaker, that will help with the education portion of taxation. We have tax credits in place for seniors. We have tax credits in place for caregivers. We have tax credits in place for medical supplies that are needed to be purchased. Nothing about any of that from the members opposite.

So if they're talking about their vision for taxation is a vision that people should buy into this province, Mr. Speaker, the people in my constituency are not buying. They're supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Who else is supporting this budget because of its tax measures, Mr. Speaker? Well let's look at the business section of *The StarPhoenix* today. What is the business section saying, Mr. Speaker: "High marks for the Saskatchewan budget." That's not even from the people who would just support me or a small group of people in my constituency — although they've already told me that, Mr. Speaker — this is from the Scotiabank economic section, and from the TD (Toronto Dominion) Bank and here's what it says, Mr. Speaker. And I quote:

The provincial government delivered a "prudent" budget last Friday that offered some tax cuts along with a balanced budget, says Scotiabank's economics arm.

Scotia Economics senior economist Mary Webb said the province's \$64-million surplus, generated from oil and gas revenues, didn't offer a stable platform for major tax reductions.

This is not me speaking, Mr. Speaker. This is a senior economics person from the Bank of Nova Scotia. And what's she saying? In essence, she's saying their tax measures were not work. They're not stable. They would produce an instable economy in this province by spending every single penny we have on tax reduction and more. That is not sustainable.

You know though, Mr. Speaker, this is really interesting because the Alberta wannabes are talking about spending every single dollar and blasting the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

And what do I read today, Mr. Speaker? Well Mary Webb also noted that in Alberta, what she says is, seeming to be always touted as the moving target for Saskatchewan's economic policy — I wonder where she might get that idea from — she says, that Alberta government has always had a rainy day fund. Even the Alberta government, Mr. Speaker, has always had a rainy day fund, it only makes sense.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk to people in this province, if they have the capacity to put some money aside in a savings fund, they do that. They're prudent people, Mr. Speaker, and they can't understand why people opposite would say spend everything and who cares about what happens tomorrow.

We put some money aside in savings accounts to help us adjust when times are more difficult in our families' lives. And we even put savings account monies aside, Mr. Speaker, heaven forbid, for our children so that they might have a better quality of life than even that we've enjoyed, Mr. Speaker.

We don't hang them with mortgages and bills because we want everything now; in essence, that we greedily will gobble up every dollar that we can today and even more and then borrow so they don't get a chance to provide programs that make sense for them. They're paying the bills that the members opposite would create.

Well Mary Webb from one bank is not alone. Derek Burleton, a senior economics person with the TD Bank who handles provincial analysis used the same word — prudent — to describe this budget.

Definitely a good grade on this one, said Burleton in an interview.

Mr. Speaker, a good grade on this budget and we're standing up and supporting, Mr. Speaker.

So the members opposite are going to stand up and say, unstable tax cuts — you didn't provide those. They're going to stand up and say that they're going to vote against tax credits; they're going to vote against universal tax credits for children, tax credits for seniors. They're going to vote against — Mr. Speaker, get this — they're going to vote against a budget that spends all of the tax cut . . . gas tax money on the roads in this province. They will stand up and vote against that.

This budget provides money that we take in from the gas tax 100 per cent to the highways in this province and more, Mr. Speaker. And they're going to stand up and vote against that.

Well maybe that's why lately we haven't heard the snake oil salesman often talk about their vision. What we've heard mostly is crocodile tears. Every day in this House, boo hoo and what's awful about Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's all we hear from the members opposite.

Well that's the area of taxation, Mr. Speaker, and that's a very, very important area for my constituents.

But there are other areas that are equally important. The area next that I would like to talk about and cover is the area and the vision that we have for education, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said opposite about education, and the critic stands up and talks and talks about what are you going to do here and what are you going to do there. Well, Mr. Speaker, our vision for education is very clear and we speak out very clearly in the budget document.

Education doesn't start at school, Mr. Speaker. Really the future of our children starts with a pregnant mom. And this budget, Mr. Speaker, includes early childhood initiatives that start pre-birth in working with young moms, with moms in the society that are more at risk because of the lack of opportunities or chances they've had.

And then it goes on to birth, when we will have an intensive screening program to identify those families and infants that are at risk. From there, it goes to the child action plan and early childhood initiatives, Mr. Speaker . . . Deputy Speaker.

And then education in a formal sense begins in the school years. We've just had a task force report, and interesting, the member opposite, the critic for Education, says and you should follow that bold report. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's what this budget is beginning to do. And she's going to stand in not too many days from now and vote against it — isn't that visionary, Mr. Speaker.

(15:00)

She's going to stand and vote against expansion of community schools in this province and expanding the community school idea into the high schools. Well that's what School^{PLUS} contemplates, Mr. Speaker, and we're going there.

Mr. Speaker, School^{PLUS} talks about integrated services in our province and that's where this budget goes, Mr. Speaker. It talks about more integration of services for health and social services and justice. It's an integrated strategy, Mr. Speaker, and who's going to stand up and vote against it? The opposite side of the House, Mr. Speaker, including the critic for Education.

Well education doesn't just stop at K to 12. In this province we know that post-secondary education is very important to this province, Mr. Speaker. And this budget has record funding for education and skills training including — get this, not everything is gloom and doom, Mr. Speaker — we have a ministry for youth who will pay attention to the needs of the young people in this province and not drive them out by the gloom and doom and the crocodile tears of the members opposite.

Why would you stay when you hear your moms and dads over there telling you how terrible this province is? They should be ashamed. They're the leaders in their communities talking about their province like that and driving young people out of this province. I would be ashamed to talk like that to my children, Mr. Speaker.

Post-secondary education will increase in this budget, Mr.

Speaker — 232.5 million for the university sector.

Mr. Speaker, I must have hit a sore spot over there. Imagine the crocodile tears that they must be sharing in their communities about the opportunities for young people to have them barking out like that across at me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, an increase of \$9.2 million including 1.25 million for expansion in the area of computer sciences. We're connecting our students to the future, Mr. Speaker — 78 million to support Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology which is an increase of over \$2 million; \$13.6 million for regional colleges in the areas that those members represent. Those colleges deliver valuable programs and services to rural and northern Saskatchewan, and that's an increase of almost \$2 million. And \$7 million for Aboriginal institutions to prepare students for the workforce because we know the future for our students is that they walk hand in hand with their Aboriginal brothers and sisters to become active parts of the society, Mr. Speaker.

Well why are they barking out at me like that, Mr. Speaker, and yelling opposite? It's because their platform and their vision for education — well get this, Mr. Speaker, we've got the cold winds blowing out there, Mr. Speaker — because their idea of education and vision for education: frozen, Mr. Speaker, frozen; frozen so they can support their tax reductions. They need to let people know in this province that they're freezing education for five years to support their tax measures because I don't hear them saying that outside these doors, Mr. Speaker. And I wouldn't either. Frozen, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, health care is very important to the people in my constituency. And they know that the best way to provide health care in any country anywhere in the world, Mr. Speaker — proven time and time again — is publicly funded, publicly administered health care because it's accessible to all and it provides a high quality of care, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the spirit of community and co-operation and in partnership, we've gone out through the province through Mr. Fyke to talk about health care, and to talk with everyone from those providers to the users in the system. You know what? I would believe that probably Mr. Fyke even talked to people like administrators and janitors, Mr. Speaker, because we care about everyone in the health care teams in this province, Mr. Speaker. And we know that this budget focuses on health districts and front-line staff, Mr. Speaker.

More than \$2.2 billion will be invested this year to provide health services to the average 35,000 Saskatchewan residents who use their services. Mr. Speaker, that's an increase of \$230 million or about 11.6 per cent from last year's budget. Health funding has now grown approximately 42 per cent since 1995, Mr. Speaker.

And it's not . . . Although we really like to support the areas that provide specialist care and tertiary care, our major centres of Regina and Saskatoon, but the Northwest Health District now are buying new equipment. The East Central Health District has announced they're buying new equipment. The Swift Current Health District is announcing they're buying new equipment. The South Country Health District is announcing

they're buying new equipment because of this budget, Mr. Speaker.

And what do the members opposite . . . what are the members opposite saying about health care? Our vision is publicly administered, publicly funded health care.

Their clear vision, stated in this House time and time again by the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy is, well why shouldn't people pay for it if they can afford it? Let them pay for their programs and services. We'd like to see a privatized system of health care because it would be better than what we have today, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I believe they should be going out and clearly telling people of Saskatchewan what they're about in the area of health care.

This budget clearly shows the difference on this side of the House for medicare, and on that side of the House for privatization and an American-style health care system. In fact they're so enamoured with American-style health care they say, you know what we'll do? Here's our vision. Let's freeze the health budget to inflation . . . to the rate of inflation. Let's freeze it.

Another cold wind blowing through Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Freeze it, and let's get a Texas-style audit in here and we'll find out what we really need to do with our health care system. Texas-style, Mr. Speaker, Alberta wannabes now going down to Texas to have a Texas-style audit. Well they should let the people of this province know what their vision is for health care.

Our vision's clear, Mr. Speaker. It's in this budget. And they'll be clearly articulating through the people of Saskatchewan and the Fyke report what we'll be doing in health care. They have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker. These Alberta wannabes have a responsibility to tell people they believe in Ralph Klein's privatization. Tell the people of this province. Be upfront with them, please, and be fair.

Now there is just so much good news in this budget, Mr. Speaker, I would take days and I will take days — I'm having public accountability sessions throughout my constituency — I'm going to take days to tell the people in my constituency the good news in this budget. It started, Mr. Speaker, in White City, and people came out to talk about the budget and I was really pleased to be able to share with them.

In closing, I want to share one more thing that makes me feel I should be standing here and supporting this budget and speaking against the amendment of the members opposite, and that's their vision of government, Mr. Speaker. Their vision of government.

Somehow in their minds they remove government from people. And they say it's people and it's government. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Government is of the people and for the people.

Mr. Speaker, government is no more or less than organizing ourselves, with help from the taxpayers, to provide the programs and services they say they want and they need, be it

highways — and I don't even have enough time to talk about all those positive things — be it education, be it health, be it environment, Mr. Speaker, and protecting the environment — more positive news in the budget on the environment, Mr. Speaker.

It's about organizing ourselves to react to the Child Advocate's plan. Mr. Speaker, they stand and they say we should be doing more about what the Child Advocate said and needs to happen in this province. So what do we do, Mr. Speaker? We introduce those measures in this budget. And you know what? We put people in there to deliver those programs. And what do the members opposite say? They're going to vote against this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Have they told me how they're going to address social development in early childhood stages? Have they told me how they're going to address the child action plan? Have they told me how they're going to support the children's ombudsperson? No, Mr. Speaker, no. They're going to freeze funding there too; maybe even cut.

Because clearly in the '80s we know where the cuts happened, and they happened deeply, Mr. Speaker. It was providing these kinds of programs and services to people, Mr. Speaker. And that's what I would be afraid of if they say they're going to stand and vote against this budget and then talk about our civil service in the way that they have.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you our vision of government. It's to put our money where our mouth is, to use that money to put people out there to provide the highway systems that people have asked us to do, to provide the education and the training that the youth have demanded of us in this province. It's to be able to have the people out there to deliver those programs and services, Mr. Speaker. And in all the while, to try as much as we can to make sure that that's a professional civil service and, Mr. Speaker, that civil service has the training and development opportunities.

Now last year, as the minister of the Public Service Commission, I talked about management development and training and I think that received very . . . a high level of attention from the members opposite. I'm not sure why, but they just couldn't understand why we'd want to do that and then thought we shouldn't have those kinds of dollars in the Public Service Commission, Mr. Speaker. But we do. We believe in a professional civil service.

Mr. Speaker, they should be telling the people of Saskatchewan what they believe in government. They don't believe in government, Mr. Speaker. You see it in many of the statements that they make.

The one that saddens me the most, and the snake oil kind of thing that the leader opposite is trying to sell, came out clearly in the last election campaign. And I think, Mr. Speaker, they need to tell the civil servants that live in my constituency, the Crown employees that live in my constituency, the educators that live in my constituency, the health care workers that live in my constituency, what they believe.

They stated they don't care about administrators and janitors,

Mr. Speaker. And the leader of the party opposite has also stated in interviews that listen up, we know where the deadwood and the skunks are. Elect me — together we'll find the deadwood and the skunks. We'll do that because we know what they did to Mr. Devine. Shame, Mr. Speaker.

That's not what I believe of our civil service. And it saddens me to hear people in leadership positions spouting off that kind of a vision and a philosophy in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Kelvington-Wadena stood up last evening and supported the Women's Secretariat, and I'll share those comments with the Women's Secretariat. And I'm very thankful for them, Mr. Speaker, because there's not much else that comes from the benches opposite that supports the status of women in our community or supports diversity in our community, Mr. Speaker. So I will pass on those thanks.

Her next comment was, you know, they're a small group. So she's saying they're a small group. Hopefully she would support that at some point we'll make them a stronger and larger group, Mr. Speaker. But you know what? Guess what? If we did, they're bureaucrats. They're the numbers in the budget that they're putting their finger on and saying get rid of them, Mr. Speaker. They want to get rid of government employees and bureaucrats. Well, excuse me, that's what the fine, professional, strong, dedicated women in Women's Secretariat are, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You would want more. I ask the members opposite, you've got some members who want more. Do they get a free vote on this budget? I'd want to know. Or are they all going to stand in unison and vote against their own amendment? No, they won't, Mr. Speaker. And what do they talk about? More. We want more.

Mr. Speaker, it's why I'm standing here and I'm supporting our budget, and I'm rejecting the amendment from the members opposite.

(15:15)

You know that this kind of talk about the civil service and about what they would do with government services reminds me of something that was horrific in the late '80s, early '90s, Mr. Speaker — privatization of government services, not in a reasoned or let's-see-if-it-makes-sense kind of way but they had an office of privatization, Mr. Speaker. And it was privatization for privatization's sake, and cut off arms of government, and cut off legs of government, put it out to the private sector. Their friends, Mr. Speaker, who then charged more money for those programs and services in the private sector. Our citizens need to know that's their agenda, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it also reminds me of Fair Share Saskatchewan. Fair Share Saskatchewan. You know people, when I heard about Fair Share Saskatchewan, I was on Regina City Council; I couldn't believe my ears.

Let's take an example, Mr. Speaker, the senior's secretariat. Now, Fair Share, you would think if you're going to take an arm of government and send it out to rural Saskatchewan, you would do this, Mr. Speaker. You'd look at the demographics of

our province, and you'd find out where the most seniors would be located. So you could come and bring the services closer to those seniors. Which, at the time, Mr. Speaker, when I looked at the demographics, happened to be around the south part of the province.

No, Mr. Speaker, what was their Fair Share Saskatchewan about? Send the senior's secretariat to St. Walburg, Mr. Speaker. Well why St. Walburg when all of the seniors, the densest population of seniors was in the South, I couldn't understand. And I couldn't understand, Mr. Speaker, what they would do with people's lives, they would do it like this.

The office of privatization was responsible for this initiative. So each week they would look around and say, h'm, where could we get votes in this province, and let's send a government department there. It doesn't matter if we've got to hook them up with telephones up there and try and hook them up with the Internet, or try and hook them up to other parts of government, or co-ordinate or whatever.

Here's another good one. Let's take the Liquor and Gaming Authority, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Liquor and Gaming Authority that works with distillers and brewers from across this country, who have to come in and show us their product lines and talk to us about how we provide responsible programs and services, and where would they send the Liquor and Gaming Authority. Anyone here remember? Where was the Liquor and Gaming Authority to go? Actually they had a few employees up there already. Hudson Bay, Mr. Speaker. Well that's about as much sense as loading us all up to hit the streets of Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

After the last production when we took them with us, Mr. Speaker, and we were to be singing from the same song sheet as the farmers, the producers, everyone, the groups all got together, and we were going to be a unified voice. Isn't that right? So we go down east. We're going to be a unified voice. Down to Ottawa, stay united, stay strong. That's what the farmers told us.

Got back in here. What was the first thing that happened when we came home? The member from Kindersley stood up and said, we need AIDA now.

We didn't need AIDA, Mr. Speaker. The farmers told us that it's a program that's got high administration to it and will not benefit the people in Saskatchewan.

But the minute we're back home, they break ranks. So what's the use of sending us all down there and saying one thing and they come back here and say the totally opposite thing? What's the use of supporting a motion, I ask the members opposite, who don't provide the people to deliver on the budget measures that people want in this province, Mr. Speaker?

I just want to close this notion of fair share and what it did to people's lives, Mr. Speaker, because not everyone in the Liquor and Gaming Authority worked for Liquor and Gaming. Spouses worked elsewhere, Mr. Speaker. Spouses were nurses in the health care system, or teachers, Mr. Speaker. And when you sent their spouse off to Hudson Bay, how could they follow without major disruption to their family?

Well in the offices, I'm told, Mr. Speaker . . . And this is how you treat people that work for you. This is a progressive workplace that they would be implementing, Mr. Speaker, is that the office of privatization, each week, would have a Friday announcement. So it was kind of like all week waiting to hear what would happen to your life on Friday. Doomsday, it was called, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's how they would treat the public service in this province and how they would treat the public service by their motion.

Well they've got a reason they want to do that, Mr. Speaker. They say that they're supporting municipalities, that somehow this is going to be a new and unique way to support municipalities in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Well I'm a member of a constituency that has municipalities as a part of it and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard from those municipalities. They talked to us and they said, you know, if you don't do anything else in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, please try and do something about 60/40. I know it's a lot of money they said, but take steps to try and change the formula for funding of education so there's more money in education. SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) together came to our minister and made that proposal, came to cabinet and talked about that, and said repeatedly, if you do nothing else, put more money into education, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to for a minute say this because I can't say it enough. I think people need to hear this. Mr. Speaker, education, our province's education system had to struggle to regain financial freedom as everyone else did, and we met with good co-operation, but now we're able to focus on Saskatchewan's children and their future.

Think of it, Mr. Speaker. It was not long ago that we spent more on interest payments, more on interest payments, wrapped up . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Hart: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of this Assembly, a guest that we have in your gallery. We have Mr. Gordon Barnhart, Secretary of the University of Saskatchewan. Mr. Barnhart is certainly no stranger to the Assembly, as he was Clerk of the Assembly during the '80s. I would like all members to welcome Mr. Barnhart this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — With leave, to introduce guests as well.

Leave granted.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to join with the member opposite in welcoming a wonderful person to this Legislative Assembly. He not only . . . Mr. Gordon Barnhart was not only formerly Clerk of this Assembly, he is now currently a wonderful constituent in a wonderful riding in Saskatoon Southeast. Welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I hope it's appropriate to quickly also welcome Gordon Barnhart here. He was someone who was a neighbour in my constituency a number of years ago, and when his work took him to Ottawa, he and his wife Elaine were very gracious to have me into their home, and be such wonderful hosts to a new member of the CPRA (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association).

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say to you: think of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was not that long ago that we spent more on interest payments than on education. A sad legacy.

In 1993-94 we spent \$865 million on education. That same year interest on the debt was our second highest expenditure at \$873 million. Mr. Speaker, think of it, \$8 million more spent on interest than on education.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report this year and this budget we will spend almost twice as much on education as on interest payments in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Hurrah, Mr. Speaker. Hard work, but we got there.

So, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities said, if you do nothing else, do that.

Mr. Speaker, the second thing municipalities said was, please, please . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member is not very far from the Chair and I realize that there is a little bit of excitement in the Chamber on some of her recent remarks, but I'd just like to remind all hon. members that this is only the second day of the budget debate. All hon. members on both sides of the House will have a chance to enter into the debate. And I would just ask that they limit their exchange across the

floor to when they have their chance to enter the debate, please.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I just have been so excited about this budget, I'm taking far too much time.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that Regina also told me, max out the Canada/Saskatchewan infrastructure program. Mr. Speaker, municipalities told our minister, max out the Saskatchewan/Canada infrastructure program; get as much money for infrastructure as you can. And we've done that, Mr. Speaker. And there's much, much more that I'll be able to share with the city of Regina that will be positive in this budget for them.

Mr. Speaker, it's the reason why I'm exceedingly proud to stand here and support this, our eighth balanced budget, and support this budget, the first budget of our new Premier, and to vote against the amendment as placed before us by the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, just extending a personal welcome to Mr. Barnhart who's joined us this afternoon. Certainly enjoyed his time when he was in this Assembly as the Clerk of the Assembly and we wish him well in his future endeavours, especially involved in bringing, I believe, some students to kind of work along with members in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget debate we're entered into at this very moment is certainly a debate that is going to cross a number of areas. And there's a number of criticisms and accolades. We've been hearing the government and, most recently, the member from Regina Wascana Plains telling us how good and how well-received their most recent budget has been.

And yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we find is we find many individuals who are very skeptical of the budget that has just been presented.

And I will acknowledge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I'm pleased to see that the government is beginning to recognize a need for funding for highways across the province of Saskatchewan. And certainly the constituency of Moosomin that I represent has a number of major highway arteries that we've been looking for a number of years, for funding into the highway network; such as Highway No. 1, Highway 48, and Highway No. 8 and No. 35 and 47.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the grave concerns I have — however, I will hold my direct criticism until we receive the notice from the Department of Highways as to where all the funding is going to go — but I am concerned when I hear the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Highways, it appears, earmarking most of the funding for twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway to the western side of the province.

And the reason I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not that it isn't needed there, but the facts are, No. 1 on the eastern side of the province certainly needs work and work immediately as well. We're very familiar with a couple of recent tragedies on No. 1

east of Regina in that Wolseley area and the Wapella area.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm looking forward to the itemized document that the department will be issuing shortly indicating where all the expenditures are going, because I believe it's very important that as we look at expenditures in the highway system, that we keep in mind the needs right across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about highways, another area of concern has to be the fact that the government continues to talk and promote the involvement of RMs (rural municipality) and the off-load again on to rural municipalities and more heavy traffic onto our grid road base or the gravel road system in the province of Saskatchewan.

(15:30)

And I can give you first-hand knowledge of how well that is working right in the area that I live, where the heavy traffic has been taken off Highway 48 between Kipling and No. 9, and it's been routed on a couple of grid road systems — one that happens to run directly by our farm.

Our farm, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . And I can also tell the Assembly today that the RMs are going to be facing some fairly significant costs just to uphold the grade on that grid road system just from the traffic that's already flowing on it, and we haven't even had heavy traffic on it for a full year.

So there are some grave concerns that our caucus has been raising in that regard as to how the funds are being expended in the Department of Highways. And we will continue to raise those because we want to see the Minister of Highways and we want to see this government . . . Mr. Speaker, when they talk about putting more money into highways, I believe as we put more money in, it's time we started looking at how we're spending the money and the fact of putting some quality dollars in and building some quality roads, rather than just appeasing everyone by a bit of thin membrane surface that actually just breaks up so immediately and leaves us with a depleted highway system.

Mr. Speaker, as well . . . or Deputy Speaker, I believe the member from Regina Wascana Plains talked about the government finally putting 100 per cent of the revenue it takes from gas tax into the highway system. Well I just want to remind the member that their own figures show that we're quite a ways from that 100 per cent figure yet. I believe that we're at about just over the \$300 million and the revenue generated from the taxes is 367 million by the government's own figures, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at highways, it's time we talked about the numbers and talked about them accurately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . And I hear the Minister of Finance commenting from his seat about the numbers. Well I'm going to get into some other numbers shortly. Just trying to show to the people of Saskatchewan that what the Minister of Finance . . . the snow job that we received the other day is actually a snow job; that really what the Minister of Finance and this government is trying to portray isn't actually all the facts as they would like the public to believe.

In fact, maybe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should move into that right now. When you talk about government expenditures, the Minister of Finance is telling us — and I believe and I have to double check this — but I know that a number of his colleagues in the debate over the past couple of days have been telling us that this is their eighth balanced budget. If that's the case, Mr. Minister . . . or Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe when you go through the Provincial Auditor's report — and this is the Fall Report 2000 — the first balanced budget was 1995. I believe my mathematics would tell me that this is the seventh balanced budget, if we wanted to get into technical details, it's not eight — promoting something that really isn't factual.

While it's seven — and I give the government credit for that — the unfortunate part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that those numbers, those numbers . . . that's all fine and dandy. They're talking about the general revenue pool. One of the problems we face, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the member from Rosthern pointed that out just a moment ago in debate with the Minister of Finance, that what the government is promoting as actual fact, really they're omitting a fair bit of the expenditures that the government is involved in.

The government likes to talk about a \$7 billion deficit. In fact they've done a very good job of putting the blame elsewhere for their problems, for their financial woes. They blame the federal government for its offload. They blame the former government for the debt that was created, and they blame hospital boards for the problems in health care. And they blame rural governments for the problems that we're facing in tax rate increases, rather than looking at the fact that all of the problems we're facing here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, really end at their feet and they're failing . . . they do not want to admit that they have been part of the problem.

I believe the minister for Indian and Northern Affairs has made the comment — yes it was — he's making the comment, yes, it was all the Devine problem. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's look at some of the debt that we have here in the province.

You know, it's fine to acknowledge that the general revenue pool is balanced. That's easy to balance. It's easy to balance when you can offload it onto Crown corporations. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that matter the taxpayers just have to take the government's own documents and find out exactly how the books are being balanced. While the general revenue debt is showing a decrease, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a couple of pages over in their own document, the Crown corporation debt is actually showing an increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We go back to 1982. The government likes to point back to prior to the 1982 election and talk about a balanced approach and a balanced budget. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while there may have been a balanced budget presented to the public in 1982, the facts were on the opposite side the Crown corporation debt was increased, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The unfunded pension liability was increasing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And also in the auditor's report we see other debt was increasing.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has happened since 1991, since the election of 1991? The government can pat itself on the back for reducing the general revenue pool. But if you look at the auditor's report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since 1991 the

unfunded pension liability has grown by \$1.1 billion. That's an increase — \$1.1 billion. Other government debt has grown by \$1.3 billion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe I'm hearing someone saying on the government side of the House that it's not true. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask him to go to the auditor, go to the auditor's report. Is the auditor not telling us the truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I don't think the auditor is trying to snow the people of Saskatchewan. The auditor is trying to present the facts so the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what the financing of this province is.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government wants to try and snow the public by saying yes, we've reduced the debt; we're on our way to reducing the total debt. The facts are they have a long way to go yet. In fact in the Fall Report of the Provincial Auditor the debt in the province of Saskatchewan, the total debt, is \$19 billion — \$19 billion total debt in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's fine to hide behind a net debt of seven when you leave out three-quarters of government expenditures. And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's important for us to let the people know that there is the fact . . . what the facts are in regards to government expenditures.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the . . . when you look at this current budget, the government talks about and brags about their \$200 million investment in health care. And I was interested, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if indeed this investment is a worthwhile investment; at the end of the day, if the public are going to see any better health care than they have today by throwing \$200 million more into the budget.

And the reason I ask that is because their own . . . there's a gentleman by the name of Mr. Fyke is currently reviewing health care and the expenditures and, I believe, will be submitting a report to the Assembly in the very near future in regards to what he sees about health care and delivery of services.

But it's interesting to note that Mr. Fyke says, and I'm quoting from an article in *The StarPhoenix*, Friday, March 30. He says:

. . . the time has come to stop assuming that more and more health dollars are the answer.

It's high time we came to the realization that the important issue is not how much we're spending in health, says Ken Fyke, the man assigned to head Saskatchewan's Commission on Medicare, who will be releasing his report within two weeks of today's budget.

It's how we're spending that money that truly matters.

He says:

“The difficulty we've got in the system is that, in the past, we've paid for volume and not looked at our results . . . We've measured quality by (the) volume of services, (and the) volume of dollars.”

And what he's pointing out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we have to . . . we need to take the time. And while it'll be interesting to see what recommendations he makes, I have a feeling that one of the recommendations he may come out with, he may suggest to this Assembly, is that we not only look at how we deliver services but maybe how we spend the dollars. Are we getting value for our dollars?

I'm waiting . . . we're . . . certainly on this side of the Assembly, we're waiting for Mr. Fyke to issue his report in regards to the health care. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of this province are waiting for that as well.

Like the couple that phoned most recently — and the government talks about how they're trying to . . . how they're actually reducing waiting lists — well a couple just called me most recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and this is one of many — asking me if there's anything that can be done. They've been on a waiting list . . . Actually the lady was calling on behalf of her husband who's been on a waiting list for over two years for a procedure that actually his specialist is saying is critical; and on the specialist's list he's got him down as critical, and yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they called in to the hospital and he's supposed to be referred to for the special procedure, the hospital couldn't even find his name on the waiting list.

And you have to ask yourself exactly what is happening in our health care system. Then they finally . . . After they went back to the specialist and said, well, we're told by the health district that he's not on the waiting list, he's not scheduled for a surgery. And the specialist certainly wasn't very pleased to hear that. And after follow-up, they finally did realize, yes, he was but ended up somewhere back in the late files of the computer.

And what that's saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the public themselves are just becoming . . . just becoming very fed up and frustrated with this health care system. And I'm suggesting to you, while more money into the health care system is probably essential in a number of various . . . I'm not exactly sure it's going to direct all the concerns out there.

We've been talking about more money into health care. I just chatted with a young lady the other evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who's been working in the health care system for two years. It's been two years since she graduated and received her nursing degree. But it was just recently, while she's been working for two years — she's been on casual work, and that work has varied from half a day to a third of a day, a week, to maybe two days a week — and she just most recently ended up on full-time work within the health care system, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have to ask yourself exactly what are we receiving for the value we are putting in our health care system? And that's why in the last provincial election, one of our campaign commitments was to really evaluate how we are spending money. And it will be interesting to see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Fyke report is brought forward, the recommendations that are brought forward. And as I indicated earlier, I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see Mr. Fyke come up with some suggestions in the way of how we measure the value we receive for the money we would spend in health care.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about a \$200 million increase in health care, the people of Moosomin are asking where exactly is the facility that this government promised us three years ago? Where is the funding for it? Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are people still waiting, many groups and organizations who have been working diligently on their own to raise the funding that they must put in place in order to receive a health care or receive a facility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan . . . I believe the member from Regina Wascana Plains talked about a system that's going to treat everyone equally. The facts are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan rural residents have to dig into their pockets for 60 . . . or 35 per cent of their capital expenditures, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So you have to ask yourself — is that a system that treats everyone equally?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to health care and this budget, another situation that was brought to my attention is the way an elderly lady was treated in her last, final days on this earth. The fact that she ended up in an acute care facility because of a heart problem, and that after two or three days the staffing just determined that this elderly lady really should be in a heavy care facility because she didn't quite meet the requirements in the acute care facility. And so there was some arguments back and forth and the doctor didn't want to discharge her, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The travesty was that while that lady . . . had she not had to face the problems associated with the debate that was going on, ended up passing, passing on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it was unfortunate that she had to face her last few days in a state of controversy versus developing a system that would acknowledge if there's an acute care bed available, that maybe we could, maybe we could handle people and we could look after them if the services are there, rather than saying, no, you've got to go 40 miles away where you're away from your family.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the area of health care, more money. Maybe that's fine, but I have to suggest to you that there are a lot of things that need to be addressed in health care yet. And I don't believe this budget is really going to address the real needs out there and really encourage physicians and specialists to stay and provide the services in this province because of the lack of leadership we see coming from that side of the Assembly.

(15:45)

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's talk about taxes for a minute. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we don't have to go that far back. We can go back to the 1999 election. What vision came from the NDP Party? What vision was presented by the NDP premier and leader at that time when they went into the provincial election, as far as the economy? Did they present an economic package for the people to vote for? No, they didn't. But the Saskatchewan Party did, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party presented an economic package talking about tax reduction. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know how close the Saskatchewan Party came to actually being able to implement that economic policy.

It's interesting to note, and I'll give the government maybe a little bit of credit there, they realize too that the people of Saskatchewan, when it came to casting their ballot, the economy and taxes in their pockets is an important thing.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at where we are today. The member from Regina Wascana Plains, the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming, talked about a reduction in the PST. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the interesting thing is she forgot to mention that it was her government that increased the PST and then just brought it back to where it was.

Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . And members are asking how high did they go? Well they jacked it up to 9 per cent — 9 per cent. They jack it up on one hand and then a couple of years later begin to reduce it and give themselves a pat on the back telling the people of Saskatchewan, look what we've done for you, look what we've put back into your pockets. The people of Saskatchewan just began to realize, oh we're just getting back what we had before in the first place; we're just getting a little back of what was originally in our tax system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget, what does this budget do for the economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What I see in this budget, and what Mr. Mandryk brings out, I believe in *The Leader-Post*, he talks about job creation in the province of Saskatchewan. And he refers to the forest industry. I think the budget talked about an increase in the number of employees in the forest industry.

But a comment here is, ironically Ainsworth Lumber of BC (British Columbia) announced just Monday that it was pulling out of three deals worth 210 million because, according to the company's president, it's just too difficult to do . . . The member from Regina South just asked for the reason. Well here it is — it's just too difficult to do business in this province.

Is this budget going to actually encourage investment in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I doubt it. I doubt you're going to see a massive influx of investment dollars into the province of Saskatchewan with this group and with this government at the helm, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of the day the people of this province are going to sit back and they're going to make a judgment call, they're going to make a judgment call. I have a sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are many members sitting on that side of the Assembly will not be here come the next general election because the people of Saskatchewan do not believe that this Premier and this Finance minister have delivered a budget that they can really take a hold of and believe that is going to build the province of Saskatchewan.

But I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will look to the Saskatchewan Party. They will look to that vision of building, of putting dollars in people's pockets so that they can invest in this province, so that they can build this province. Because we do have a good province to live in; we do have an excellent province to live in. We have wealth in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that should be just . . . we should be actually a booming province rather than a province that has been a have-not province and a have-not province for far too long, Mr.

Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you talk about job creation, you talk about jobs and go to the people of . . . or the town of Wolseley and ask the people in the town of Wolseley whether or not this government has a vision for job creation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at a company pulling out of the province of Saskatchewan and then shortly after the 56 jobs are closed, a \$40 million investment to the very company that pulled out of the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have to ask yourself exactly what was going on.

And I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member of Regina South wants to blame the health districts again for the further loss of jobs in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I believe the member from Regina northwest was at the celebration a year ago in the town of Wolseley for Abbott Laboratories, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's no wonder as we assess this budget that there are so many holes in it. I remember just prior to and . . . I remember the Throne Speech debate a few days ago in this Assembly and I remember the members across the floor with glee just saying, just wait for the budget, just wait for the budget, you're not going to be able to find anything to criticize in this budget because it's going to be such a good budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we warned them then, and we're telling them right now that the budget is certainly not the budget that they could really gloat over. And the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just reflected the snow job that the province of Saskatchewan and this minister is trying to level across the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, come the next election the public of this province are going to sit down and they're going to evaluate the performance of this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're going to say we've had enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could certainly go on and on and on in regards to the budget. We could talk about agriculture. We could talk about . . . I think one of the headlines was this budget was an attempt by this government, NDP, hoping to buy back the farm, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government is trying to buy back votes and it will only go so far. The average . . . the electorate and taxpayer in the province of Saskatchewan are going to look at this budget and look at the vision of this government, and they're going to find it wanting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're going to find it wanting.

And they're going to look to a party that has a vision for this province. They're going to look to a party that is prepared to work with people to build the province, rather than dismantle the province — rather than just giving jobs, rather than just giving jobs to their own political cronies as we've seen in the most recent hirings within the province of Saskatchewan.

What did this budget do, if this budget did something to really assist the people of this province? Creating 570 more jobs in the public sector. What people are telling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not what they're looking for. They're looking for

government to work better and to work wiser and to work within, rather than becoming larger, as this budget is certainly doing . . . as this budget is currently doing.

I believe the vision for this Premier and this government is to become larger. They talk about job creation. They're failing badly so they've got to create the jobs from within to try and meet some of their targets, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the member from Canora-Pelly brought forward an amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, really hitting one of the crux of the matters and the issues in this budget. And the fact that again municipal governments are going to . . . and taxpayers across this province are going to be probably seeing an increase in their tax base because of the fact that municipal governments were left out of this budget.

In fact, the off-load is going back onto the property base, and as a result, if the government talks about a decrease in taxes, the realities are we just pull, we just pull out of another . . . we just reach into the other pocket and pull it out again and give back exactly what the government has handed to us.

Five hundred and seventy more jobs in the public sector, and that's just the start. Who knows where it's going to end? Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that what the public of Saskatchewan are asking for? No, they're not. They're asking for the government to run more efficiently. They're asking for the government to show themselves . . . show that you can give some leadership, that you can tighten your belt.

You don't have to level . . . you don't have to build higher levels of administrator and bureaucratic government in order to provide services. Let's put the money . . . And I believe I heard the minister from Social Services talking about more jobs created in his department. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the CBOs (community based organization) certainly weren't pleased with the increase they were given. What they were asking for, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do we need more jobs or do we need to look at paying the people who are doing the work, do we need to look at paying them fairly and recognizing their contribution?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hear the Minister of Social Services brags about the decrease in the number of people on welfare. He wants to tell us that we've actually got welfare recipients going down. But he keeps hiring more people. If we're actually decreasing, as he says, the people on welfare, do we need more individuals working or do we just look after those who are providing the job for us rather than creating administrative positions even in the department of welfare?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget is certainly a budget that is wanting. I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan find this budget to be a budget that's wanting. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the people of Saskatchewan are just waiting for the day when they can voice their opinion through the polls as to what they think of this budget.

So therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I speak in support of the amendment and opposed to the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to make a few comments on the current budget. I've made mention before in the House about the concerns that my constituents in Arm River have in regards to their future. I'm afraid to say that the residents of Arm River, having reviewed this budget, find very little comfort to them in any meaningful way from this budget.

Mr. Speaker, history has shown us that one of the strongest measures of any government is how well they manage the taxpayers' money. Well when you mention that, SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) seems to come to mind, Channel Lake, Sask Valley Potato Corp, SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority).

You know, this government seems to forget it's the taxpayers' money, not their own to just go and spend it however they want. Crown corporations spending money outside this province, outside this country, making investments, losing money in most of them.

One of the largest points to the current budget is not as much how they spent the taxpayers' money, though they largely failed here as well, but what they did with a large portion of our tax dollars, which was nothing.

Five hundred million dollars, Mr. Speaker — \$500 million — is parked by this government despite pressing problems that paralyzed Saskatchewan these past few years. Mr. Speaker, more of this money should have gone to help out the most important of government resources, the hard-pressed Saskatchewan taxpayer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see absolutely no relief to our citizens, no relief from the PST, the gas tax, property tax, which may be on the rise this year. Where are the new cuts to income tax? I was looking for new tax relief, same as my constituents were, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I didn't see any.

I did see a windfall, however, in oil and gas revenues. Five hundred million dollars again for those opposite who may have missed that.

At the very least some of the surplus should have gone to help our residents in the area of direct tax relief. But no, this money is probably put away for election slush fund. We don't know.

Further to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see rate hikes — SaskEnergy and SaskPower. There's most certainly a backdoor tax policy in this present government. So any tax relief this government is claiming is suddenly gone by the very fact of these hikes.

So instead of eliminating the small-business tax, they drop it. They do a small concession — drop it from 8 per cent to 6 per cent and then send utility rates soaring with no end in sight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the mayor of Davidson they do not know how they could keep their recreation and public facilities open in the face of skyrocketing utility rates. I have spoken to many of the business owners in Arm River over the last week, and they tell me this is basically too much to bear; that they hope that this budget would deliver some relief to their dwindling

bottom line.

Calls and letter continue to pour in from individuals who are struggling with the present, let alone the future rates of utilities and the long list of taxes they must continue to pay.

But let's not forget about the relief this government did give to Saskatchewan taxpayers in regards to utility rates — \$25 a family. Mr. Deputy Speaker, enough to send mom and dad out for a movie and a small popcorn so that for two hours at least they can forget about the soaring rate increases the government is heaping upon them. Because that's about all it's worth, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

For a government that wishes to keep \$500 million to itself while estimating over \$1 billion in revenues for 2001-2002 in combined oil and gas, liquor and gaming sectors, it would still seem to me that more meaningful tax cuts would result. But no. However this government has decided to spend money where they believe it should be spent — 550 new government employees at a cost of \$50 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, this money could have provided a tax cut of \$230 per family. But let's all remember that the government thinks 25 bucks will be enough to people to pay their wages.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's very important that we talk about this budget's lack of substance in the area of urban-rural revenue sharing. Here again, we come up with a goose again, a zero increase. Yet another year ahead for urban and rural governments to struggle with the high costs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our local governments need more help than this. The only option they have is raising mill rates, and that's no longer simply feasible.

(16:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk about one of the high costs that many of my communities are facing now. As Sask Water critic, I've been following with keen interest the incident at Walkerton, Ontario. The result of this tragedy has brought new awareness across Canada about clean and safe water supplies for our residents.

In Saskatchewan recently there have been alarms raised in several small communities, including my hometown of Bladworth. While the water quality problem has since been resolved there, it must be noted that many towns like these have water and sewer infrastructures that will be needing expensive repairs or even replacements in the near future to guarantee a safe water quality and efficient sewage disposal system.

How are these communities, in large part now without their elevator tax base, going to come up with the funds necessary to make the repairs so vital to the safety and health of their own residents?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, help is needed for these communities now, and we continue to spend money as needed to ensure the drinking water quality of both our urban and rural residents is looked after. Sask Water still seems to think potatoes are more important than possibly spending money on water systems out

there. They're going into the potato industry again. I don't know if the word land bank means nothing to these people out here, but it seems like they're intent on leasing and buying more land around the Outlook-Lucky Lake area — money that could be spent on water systems to help small towns and urban areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the past many months we have seen a steady decline in the quality of our provincial health care system. Our caucus has called repeatedly for changes but little seems to have happened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our health care funding is now \$2.2 billion or 39 per cent of total spending in this budget. This issue of course is the utmost importance to Saskatchewan residents and my constituents. Increases in the areas of cancer treatment and obtaining a second air ambulance should hopefully improve this sector of our health care system.

But again this government somehow thinks that merely money is the answer. Their own commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is already hinting as we on this side of the House have been saying all along, manage your resources more efficiently with less waste in administration and more spent on front-line services.

We must get waiting lists under control. We must open — not close — hospital beds. We must protect our overworked, front-line, medical personnel. I would ask this government to look closely at what the people of Saskatchewan want as a new vision of health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, each new day brings us closer to spring seeding and each new day there is more and more urgency in the calls, the letters, and e-mails that my office gets from farmers who need assistance before seeding. They simply need some cash to be able to get going. The 2001 crop will probably go down as one of the most expensive in our province's history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here are just a couple of facts about the rising costs farmers are facing in 2001. From last April to this April, a hundred gallons of diesel fuel will now cost \$23.15 more; fertilizer costs will be \$2.30 per acre more, when you're . . . if you're applying 80 pounds of 46-0-0 nitrogen. I can also go about . . . on about the high cost of . . . high equipment repair costs, as we all know, seem to be . . . go up. Chemical costs, seed costs — the list is endless, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you're on the farm.

And all we have from this government is a commitment to the Canadian Farm Income plan or AIDA II, the sequel. What a relief it will be to farmers to, once again, to begin to fill out endless forms for assistance that never arrives.

This Premier and Agriculture minister should have been in Ottawa if they didn't like that program. And they knew it was no good, flawed. But did they go down there? No, they sent, sent a, I guess, a strongly worded letter. They should have been down there fighting for more rights and more money for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, farmers need not only economic support but also active support from this government. We need to address our most important industry with the same urgency the

farmers are expressing now.

As a farmer myself, I can attest to the fact that we are, indeed, in danger of losing a generation of farmers. Farmers in Arm River and around Saskatchewan just cannot comprehend why their own provincial government isn't doing more to help them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the agriculture industry sees this government holding onto half a billion dollars as their future hangs in the balance, then it is not hard to understand the frustration among farmers today. Farmers know the value of saving for a rainy day, as would quite naturally be the case. They're not demanding everything, but they need just . . . but they need more than just commitments to another federal program that doesn't work. Farmers are asking for real help, Mr. Deputy Speaker, real help this spring, and this government isn't listening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new Rural Revitalization ministry is all set to spend their 800,000 budget in the new office in downtown Regina. There's not a clear mandate from this one, and no clear direction. The fact that this government believes the idea of rural revitalization should begin with eight employees in Regina, gives us an idea of how much revitalization they hope to do.

After she spends that money on her eight employees, I hope she has a little left over. Unfortunately on the weekend the Regina Pats lost, so I think their bus is free for this summer. So hopefully maybe she can rent that — it would also provide a little bit of money for the Regina Pats who could probably use some — and they can go out in rural Saskatchewan, and they can go out and she can visit these communities and talk to them.

One of the communities that have tried to . . . have sent her messages a month and a half ago, was the town of Marquis; they haven't even phoned back, let alone to talk to them. And this is a ministry and a government, a Premier that said he would talk to the people, listen to the people? These people out there would like a call. They would like at least a phone call back.

You know, if this new ministry is to have any value, then the work must be in the small, rural communities of this province. Listening is the key to any results that may come up as the year progresses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Minister of Rural Revitalization is also the Minister of Highways, I think a few words need to be said about this year's Highway's budget also. I welcome the new money, which appears at least to be going into our crumbling infrastructure. But already I see holes along many of the highways in my constituency as spring continues. I would like to assure my constituents these broken patches will be repaired this spring, rather than late in the fall like last year.

I'm going to watch closely as the new construction tenders come out for I'll be calling for the renewal of many of the secondary highways in Arm River constituency to be fixed. Business owners, residents, school bus and ambulance drivers will not tolerate another summer of bad roads nor will there be any patience left for the excuses that the government was dishing out to the people of Saskatchewan last year.

Results will be expected and I hope to see the crews out in force repairing and building. But as my constituents say, when they see the graders and the utes moving, then they'll believe it. And I hope the 71 new people they hired for highways goes out to fix potholes, won't be lost up here in administration. But I haven't seen any of them hired yet and I haven't seen any of the forms going out or any of the talk in the highway . . . I've talked to a couple of highway foremen. They haven't said that there was going to be extra men out there helping them. When I hear that, then I'll believe that this government is really true about fixing these highways, rather than just talk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I'm glad to see some movement in the area of education funding, we still have a long way to go before we see any significant easing of the tax burdens to the residents who have been hit hard by the provincial downloading over the past decade. We still need to see a better commitment by the province to assist local school boards with their education costs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, announcements of new schools may be encouraging but I wonder if rural schools are really in the cards when you see communities like Marquis, who are currently fighting to keep their school from closing. They're having a meeting tomorrow night in the town of Marquis, if any of the government members . . . I think invitations were sent to the Premier, to a few other cabinet ministers — or anybody, or even a deputy minister would like to come out there and tell these people why their school is closing.

The attendance has only dropped by five students and they have a projection that it's going to grow by more than that in the next couple of years. They take in in that division over \$600,000 in tax a year, given to the school division. That school takes \$225,000 to run.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we take this budget apart piece by piece you can also look at: is there any commitment to our children's . . . commitment to our children's education is vital importance from K to 12 to post-secondary.

New resources are always good to see. But combined with this must be real effort to keep our graduates in the province and keep our children educated and keep the schools open in the rural, in the urban areas, Mr. Speaker. To do it, to keep the students here, we need new businesses in which our children can realize their future right here at home, for not everybody can work for the government. If there are jobs for our graduates, then our investment in our provincial future is more than assured.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see that the present coalition government has failed to get any grasp on the kind of action needed, I think, to turn Saskatchewan around. You know, by providing little in the way of concrete tax cuts new businesses will not see any reason to set up shop here. With tax cuts replaced by utility rate increases, new businesses have no incentive to put their bottom line to risk. Existing businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to earn an adequate income after all the expenses are paid.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing has been done here that will result in an overall improvement to the economy of Saskatchewan that

I can see, and the time has come for the new Premier to decide whether he will take us in a new direction or more of the same. Unfortunately, it looks like more of the same.

This government treats taxpayers' money like it was their own. They would do well to remember where it came from — from the hard-working, good people of our province. All we see is this government . . . the population staying the same, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this government growing bigger, hiring more, it seems like, administrators. Not that there's anything wrong with that but, like one of my colleagues had pointed out, in Social Services they keep saying that they're getting more people off. Well why do they need more people in there?

We need more people in the front lines working, not more people up here in Regina; not more civil servants. We need people, nurses, and we need people fixing them potholes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government was listening to the people — as I don't think they are; as they should be though — the answers are there. All they have to do is ask. All they have to do is act, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ask any student on any campus these days what he or she needs and the first thing they will say is a job. They need a job to go to when they graduate. Second on the list, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be a break from the high student loans they must burden, from the high tuition fees and services. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately it looks like tuition fees are going up this year.

What they received from the budget was a very modest increase to university and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), and of course, the tax credit increase. All in all, not much relief in the continuing stress of student loans and student workloads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan residents are very patient when it comes to health care in our province. With the length of the waiting lists, they have to be patient. But results from the new injection of cash and action from the information derived from the Fyke Commission is now a tree which people expect fruit from this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I received many calls from anxious people who just want a fair shake when they go in for treatment. Is it too much to ask for a loved one to have a hospital bed if it's truly needed? I don't think so. I can go back many years and not think of any time when hospital services in this province were in such a terrible condition as they are in right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm alarmed at the number of cases in Arm River where families with family members needing long-term care being refused a bed. It is difficult to be in this situation, especially as they leave the health care facility that they notice that some beds stand empty, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When I get these calls, when I make the calls, the answer usually begins with this typical response from the health district officials — these beds are not designated for long-term care. Well this is poor solace for the family whose loved ones need care desperately. Worse than this is when loved ones are sent to larger centres which are many hours away. Here again this

policy seems intent on breaking the family bond.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are as well medical cases where patients try to receive emergency treatment at our large hospitals in the city. Many times patients do not receive the proper treatment and were released only to have to be readmitted shortly afterwards. Clearly medical staff is so short that people are falling through the cracks of our health care system when they need it the most, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue to have my office compile cases where individuals run into the difficulty during the treatment of a medical problem. As long as the cases continue to come in, and they come in as months go on with more frequency, I will continue to press this government to make the changes they keep promising to make our health care system better.

(16:15)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have spoken to many of our retired folks in Arm River who have expressed their concerns about the high taxes and high living expenses. Seniors are worried about hikes in their utility rates, high fuel costs, and of course high school taxes on the property tax bill.

Seniors stress that they are increasingly worried that their fixed incomes are under considerable burdens. Without exception, these seniors are asking for some sort of assistance in the high amount of school taxes that they must pay. They are saying they have paid for their kids and their grandchildren and they are no longer in a financial position to pay for yet another generation. I believe that government should look at the issues of many seniors in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have mentioned earlier, farmers are facing a dramatic increase in many areas of farm inputs. The fertilizer prices have absolutely been going through the roof. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the price of 1 tonne of fertilizer has almost doubled than what it was last fall, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And now to add insult to injury, fertilizer experts are now hinting that there could be shortages. What is this government doing to address that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government does not intend to help farmers in a direct way or any way for that matter, then what will the government do for farmers at all? I grow frustrated as I tell farmers that are working hard to see farmers' interests protected only to find a government that just doesn't seem to care, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Arm River constituency and of Saskatchewan deserve better than this budget that was delivered. They expected that at the very least the Minister of Finance would acknowledge that further work needs to be done on taxation, on the overall economy, on health care, education, and our vital infrastructure.

Instead, the residents of my constituency saw that this government . . . was pleased with very little that they announced in the budget. It's difficult for them to have hope that the future will bring change when this budget does largely . . . largely does not . . . does little to address the continuing problems out there in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe there are solutions to the problems that we have here in Saskatchewan. What we need is for the government to finally come to terms with the fact that Saskatchewan taxpayers' money belongs to the people of Saskatchewan. That this money does not belong to the NDP-Liberal coalition, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When we see the immediate and desperate need for tax, we can see that obvious steps need to be taken to save our province from further falls down the economic ladder.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would ask the government to finally start to listen to the people out there, especially the rural residents that they've ignored for so many years. Only then will real solutions to real problems be solved.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot support this budget, but I will support the amendments brought forth by the member from Canora-Pelly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is my first opportunity to congratulate you on your new posting. So let me say very directly that I think that you will be, and you are — you've already proven yourself to be an excellent Deputy Speaker. I wish you all the best in the discharge of your duties.

I also would like to congratulate the Speaker, the member from Prince Albert Carleton. I know that he will serve this legislature ably, fairly, and with a very clear view he has already demonstrated, a very clear view of the Speaker's job to educate Saskatchewan people about the important role that this legislature plays, and a very clear idea of legislating, or of educating rather, the MLAs in this legislature about proper function and the proper way to address the Chair.

So I would like to congratulate both you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Speaker.

And while I'm on the subject of congratulations, I would like to congratulate my new colleagues — first of all the member for Regina Elphinstone, and the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Now members of this side of the House will know that I followed that campaign very, very closely because I happen to live in the Premier's riding. Now that's a great privilege.

I also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had the dubious distinction of being a recipient of the opposition's scare poll. And I refer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to this poll that was supposedly an unbiased gathering of opinion of the Saskatoon Riversdale constituents.

In case the members opposite have forgotten, this was a negative American style campaign tactic that was a blatant attempt to hint to the voters in Saskatoon Riversdale that the New Democratic Party were planning to close St. Paul's Hospital.

I was phoned on that poll, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my immediate reaction was one of anger that the party opposite should stoop to such low depths.

I think, and it is apparent that the voters of Saskatoon Riversdale recognized that this is an underhanded tactic that should not be used in an election campaign. Because what were the results, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What were the results? We have a Premier, a wonderful person, sitting here in this legislature representing Saskatoon Riversdale, representing all of Saskatchewan, and also making a very clear statement to the people of Saskatoon Riversdale that St. Paul's Hospital will never be closed as long as he is Premier of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Now the voters of Saskatoon Riversdale very correctly recognized a dirty tactic when they saw it, and they very correctly voted against that dirty tactic. But that tactic illustrates a theme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I'm going to elaborate on today, the doom and gloom style of the opposition, or as my seatmate, the member from Melville calls it, the trash talk from the opposition, the trash talk — nothing's good in Saskatchewan, everything's good outside our borders.

Now I want to contrast this doom and gloom, this trash-talk approach, with what we do on this side of the House, where we accentuate the positive. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know, we know very clearly that Saskatchewan is a great place to live, Saskatchewan is a great place to work, Saskatchewan is a great place to raise a family. Saskatchewan, in short, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a place where positive things are happening.

On this side of the House, we don't trash talk Saskatchewan. Unfortunately we have to leave that to the opposition. What we do is we talk about the positives. So while I'm on my feet, I would like to talk about the 10 top reasons why Saskatchewan is a great place to live. Ten reasons to move to Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, it's . . . the members opposite are talking about David Letterman — that's right. I am going to give you the David Letterman version of why Saskatchewan is a great place to live, why people should move to Saskatchewan.

Now some of the reasons the members opposite will have heard before. But in their doomy, gloomy way, they want to ignore them. Some of the reasons may be new to them because they just aren't doing their research. They're so busy trash-talking that they have no time to look at all the positive things in this province.

There are reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are solid reasons to celebrate our province, and I'm going to give you 10 of them. And I'm sure when other members on this side of the House follow me, that they will have 10 more or 20 more or 30 more, because there are hundreds of reasons to celebrate Saskatchewan.

Let's start with reason number 10. Reason number 10, youth employment. In the year just ended, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 86,000 young people found work in this province; 86,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were working in this province — 3,000 more than in 1999. What a great way to start a new millennium, Mr. Deputy Speaker, youth

employment in this province. Not youth unemployment — youth employment. Jobs for youth in this province.

And we're building on that, Mr. Speaker, with our new summer jobs program, the centennial students summer employment program. We had 3,000 more last year, and this year with the centennial program, 1,500 new jobs for young people. That's reason number 10 to move to Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Reason number nine, low utility rates. Low utility rates. We already know about the great deals you get with SaskTel, the great deals you get with SaskPower. Let me talk a bit about automobile insurance, okay. Automobile insurance.

A 2000 Ford Taurus, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan rates are the lowest, lowest for automobile insurance for a 2000 Ford Taurus for any province except PEI (Prince Edward Island). It's a little lower in PEI, but here in Saskatchewan it's very inexpensive to license a 2000 Ford Taurus. Rates for young people between 18 and 25 are significantly lower than in BC, Ontario, and Alberta.

As a matter of fact, I want to just quote a little. Suppose you're a young person and you buy a 1996 Chevrolet Cavalier. Well you're going to register that car and drive it in Saskatchewan, you're going to pay \$872 for the year. Now what will your licence plates cost in Vancouver? — \$1,827. Almost \$1,000 more for that young person. It's a good reason to move from BC to Saskatchewan.

If you're in Calgary and you're a young person and you have a 1996 Chevrolet Cavalier, it will cost you \$3,386 to put licence plates on that vehicle. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you're in Toronto, if you're in Toronto the good and you want to drive a Chevrolet Cavalier, it's going to cost you \$5,300 for licence plates; \$5,300 in Tory Ontario is what it costs that young person to license that automobile. And what does it cost here in Saskatchewan? A mere \$872. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a significant reason to move to Saskatchewan.

And if you don't want to move to Saskatchewan for the low automobile insurance rates, come to Saskatchewan for the low energy rates. I'm just going to focus on Alberta just for a moment here.

In Saskatchewan you would pay for your energy to SaskEnergy, you pay \$4.52 per gigajoule. Now a gigajoule is a whole lot of hot air, Mr. Speaker, and it helps you to heat your homes. But if you were in Alberta, you would be paying \$9 a gigajoule for that same natural gas. Almost double, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I would suggest that that is one very good and very significant reason to move to Saskatchewan.

Now let me get to reason number eight. Reason number eight is something that I am particularly proud of because I'm from Saskatoon. Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada and one of only seven countries in the world to have a synchrotron. A synchrotron means that Saskatchewan is and will continue to be an innovator in research.

We innovate in this province, just like the announcement just yesterday made by the Minister for Economic and Co-operative

Development when he talked about the Saskatchewan Research Network, or SRnet for short. This is a super high-speed Internet pipeline that will facilitate national research. Something that we can be very, very proud of.

Scientists, innovators are moving to Saskatchewan because they know that we have significant facilities here in this province and we are a significant player on the world stage, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(16:30)

Reason number seven. CommunityNet. As the Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation will be very fond of telling you, CommunityNet is expanding Internet access to rural communities.

By becoming the anchor tenant, government is making high-speed Internet possible for rural communities. And that means something very significant these days, Mr. Speaker, as most people are becoming wired and are buying all the latest computers and everything, they want not a slow dial-up modem, they want high-speed Internet connection. And that is exactly what we are being able to deliver by virtue of CommunityNet and SaskTel. It's possible thanks to this budget, this great budget, this brilliant budget — dare I say it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? — this exciting budget.

And by the way, I should point out if people are needing more information about Internet hook-ups; we also have universal Internet numbers for dial-up. There's no long-distance charges in this province on top of your Internet charges if you happen to live in a rural or small urban area. We should be very, very proud of that and we should celebrate it, instead of doing the trash-talking like the members opposite do.

Now, got to get to reason number six now. Reason number six to move to Saskatchewan. Reason number six why Saskatchewan is a great place to live and to work. Community schools, Mr. Speaker.

In this budget, this exciting budget, we have announced the creation of 42 new community schools — 42 new community schools, Mr. Speaker, in rural and urban areas, both elementary schools and high schools. This doubles the number of community schools in this province and it will help kids who are growing up in poverty to get ahead, Mr. Speaker.

And it's worthwhile pointing out, as other members have done, that this budget now means that we are spending twice as much on education as we spend on interest on the Tory debt — twice as much we are spending on education.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give you the fifth reason to move to Saskatchewan. The fifth reason is we have the highest rate of volunteerism per capita in Canada. We have over 6,000 registered not-for-profit, volunteer-driven organizations in this great province. And 47 per cent of Saskatchewan people — that's nearly one in two, Mr. Speaker — 47 per cent of Saskatchewan people volunteer their time and talents.

Just a couple of days ago in this House, Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to be able to rise in my place and to announce that

we were distributing pins to these volunteers in this wonderful Year of the Volunteer.

We have purchased 450,000 pins, Mr. Speaker. Just think of it — 450,000 pins will be given out by various volunteer organizations to their spark plugs, the volunteers who keep their organizations going.

And we should also add to this, as well as the spirit of volunteerism, Mr. Speaker, we have creativity among Saskatchewan citizens. Creativity and compassion and co-operation and hard work. Those are the cornerstone values of the people of this province, and that is a very significant reason to move to this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Because, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you a secret. Saskatchewan people see opportunity around every corner. They don't look, like the members of the opposition, and see doom and gloom; they see opportunity, Mr. Speaker. And that's a great reason to move to this province.

Reason number four, moving on. I said I would only give 10 reasons so I should probably speed up a little. Reason number four is nursing education, Mr. Speaker. Do you know that in many provinces it takes three years to receive a diploma in nursing. And what is the situation here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Well let me tell you.

In this province, within three years or depending on how you set up your nursing education program, within three years or three and a half years or four years, Mr. Speaker, you get not a diploma but you can get a degree in nursing. That is a significant advantage.

As well, as members of this Assembly know, we have just introduced legislation for changes to permit advanced practice opportunities for nurses with advanced training. That's a very significant reason, Mr. Speaker, for nurses to come to Saskatchewan.

And we should be very proud of the forward looking initiatives that the former minister of Health and the former . . . and the member for Saskatoon Nutana and the former associate minister of Health, the member for Saskatoon Eastview have done in this regard. I think that all people of Saskatchewan, all patients, and all nurses should be very thankful for the innovation and the far-sightedness that those two members have shown in introducing this.

And the other thing is, Mr. Speaker, speaking of nurses, we have bursaries for nurses who've been away from the profession so that they will return to nursing. And, Mr. Speaker, just closing off on reason number four, this exciting, great budget adds funding for access for a northern nursing program.

Now reason number three, Mr. Speaker, how about sound financial management? The people of this province saw a clear demonstration of that the other day when our Finance minister rose in his place and delivered our eighth balanced budget. It's an exciting budget, Mr. Speaker, a sustainable budget, a progressive budget.

We are . . . we continue to implement sustainable tax cuts and tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, which as my colleague from Regina South says allows Saskatchewan to have the lowest percentage of its budgetary income from income tax of any province. So we have a diversified economy and diversified revenue.

Reason number two, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the province that is home to programs like building independence and the Saskatchewan employment supplement. Programs that work to reduce child and family poverty.

Now reason number one, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a growing and vibrant Aboriginal population. Sixty per cent of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan are under the age of 25. These are young people eager and ready to get an education and to join the workforce and to help Saskatchewan compete in a global economy. They are Saskatchewan's best-kept secret. They are people who want to be a strong part of this province as we build this economy together.

So those are the top 10 reasons, Mr. Speaker, why Saskatchewan is a great place to live.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's that vibrant Aboriginal population that I mentioned just a moment ago — our number one reason — that I'd like to talk a bit more about. Because Aboriginal people, Mr. Speaker, are beginning to build a strong presence in Saskatchewan and they are our natural competitive advantage in many, many areas. Areas like mining, forestry, gaming, tourism, science, and manufacturing. And I could go on and on.

Let me highlight it though, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's natural competitive advantage is the Aboriginal population in this province.

I'd like to just briefly refer to a column that was written by Doug Cuthand recently. It appeared in *The Leader-Post* on March 26 of this year. Now I'll spare you the quote but basically what Mr. Cuthand, a noted Aboriginal journalist and filmmaker, did in that column was to question the views of the opposition.

Now I'm not going to repeat his words, but I would say that I would like to contrast Mr. Cuthand's view of what the opposition is promoting with our positive initiatives for First Nations and Metis people that are being put forward in the Throne Speech and in this exciting budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the government on the emphasis on Aboriginal people in the budget and in the Throne Speech. I see this as a continued commitment to a strong and visionary future in Saskatchewan. The Throne Speech states that Saskatchewan must be a prosperous, secure, and tolerant society where diversity is celebrated and seen as strength. Strength, Mr. Speaker, our natural competitive advantage.

You know, in my new role I have tried a bit of French by virtue of my function of being responsible for the office of French language coordination. I've tried a bit of Cree by virtue of my function as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Right now I'm going to try a bit of Latin because the motto of this province, Mr. Speaker — *Multis E Gentibus Vires*— From Many Peoples, Strength. We must never forget that, Mr. Speaker — From

Many Peoples, Strength.

This government is committed to working with Metis and with First Nations people to secure a strong future. As the budget says, we will be connecting to the future, and Aboriginal people are a key part of that connection.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we work on connecting to the future, I want to say that there will be two main thrusts from my department in the upcoming year. And I'm very pleased and very proud, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier has entrusted me with the responsibility of being the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

We have two main thrusts that we will be working on very diligently and very aggressively in the upcoming months and years. The first is the Metis and off-reserves First Nations strategy, and the second is the treaty land entitlement framework.

The Metis and off-reserve First Nations people strategy brings together 13 government departments in an historic mission of cooperation to address the social and economic needs of the province's Aboriginal people. Thirteen departments, Mr. Speaker, working together. It's based on wide-ranging community consultations, consultations that are and will be ongoing. The strategy has four goals: primary, secondary and university education. Goal number two: education and training for a representative workforce. Goal number three: a representative workforce, and goal number four: individual and community well-being.

The goals in the strategy respond to what we heard from Aboriginal people during our consultations. And we will be talking further with communities and with First Nations and Metis leadership in the coming weeks as the various departments prepare to move forward with their own initiatives under the strategy.

We will also be developing measures for success for the strategy, and we will seek advice from communities and Aboriginal leadership on this. This strategy is a meaningful, provincial initiative investment and one upon which we hope to build in future years.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the other major thrust in my department, and that is the ongoing treaty land entitlement process. TLE (treaty land entitlement) is a process to provide land to First Nations pursuant to the treaties. We will continue to work with the federal government, and with First Nations to fulfill this important obligation.

The TLE framework ensures that the interests of all people of Saskatchewan are protected in the process. It's on a willing seller, willing buyer basis. TLE leads to greater economic, and social independence for First Nations, and it provides economic development opportunities for all members of the province.

The treaty process, Mr. Speaker, is designed as a course of joint problem solving and mutual recognition. And I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, that more than 365,000 acres have attained reserve status through TLE, helping First Nations' people to build strong economies. The province of Saskatchewan believes in respecting treaties, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had the pleasure of attending the launch of two new books sponsored by the Office of Treaty Commissioner, and I would like to quote very briefly from one of them, *Bounty and Benevolence*. This quote describes the negotiating strategy of Alexander Morris, chief negotiator for the Crown during the Treaty 4 negotiations. And the quote is as follows:

... the government's chief negotiator, Alexander Morris, conveyed [to the participants]: that they should regard the treaty as a 'gift' from a beneficent Queen mother ... They would have the use of their lands 'as before,' but with the addition of presents, annuities, and other benefits. Morris expressed it this way: 'What I have offered does not take away your living, you will have it then as you have now, and what I offer now is put on top of it.'

(16:45)

Mr. Speaker, I said that I was trying to learn some French, a little bit of Latin — not very good Latin — and also some Cree. Mr. Speaker, in Cree, the word for treaty is tipuhumatowin and it means a reciprocal exchange, a payment to each other.

I'd also like to quote a statement made by Chief Richard Poorman of the Kawacatoose First Nation this past weekend. I was at Kawacatoose to celebrate the signing of a TLE agreement between Kawacatoose, Canada, and Saskatchewan. Chief Poorman said:

This meeting is done on behalf of the children, so they can have a future.

I endorse Chief Poorman's view. That is what our work is all about. Our budget is a reflection of that commitment. The Throne Speech was a reflection of that commitment. And our actions will continue to be a reflection of that commitment.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude today with a quotation from this year's *Massey Lectures* given by Michael Ignatieff. He says:

The lesson that follows is true for aboriginals and non-aboriginals alike: you can't act effectively in the world and take responsibility for yourself unless you respect yourself. And you can't do that unless your identity as (a) member of a people is honoured by the political system in which you live.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that our actions in the Throne Speech and in the budget will serve to show that our political system does honour Aboriginal peoples. Whether it's the Metis in off-reserve strategy and its commitment to spend an extra \$10 million, or whether it's our ongoing TLE negotiations, we work to show that respect.

Through our commitment to introduce the Metis Act, we will work to recognize the unique historic, economic, and cultural contributions that the Metis have made to the development and prosperity of Saskatchewan and Canada. We work to show our respect.

So I can assure all members that I will be voting for this budget,

and I will be rejecting the amendment of the members opposite. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to speak about the budget. I forego the opportunity to speak on the Throne Speech, but I'm pleased to be able to rise today to address the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance.

And the budget that he presented was called *Connecting to the Future*, Mr. Speaker. But I think in his title he missed out the complete sentence. It should be, connecting to the future in my rear-view mirror. Because, Mr. Speaker, this budget is clearly about the past — not about the future, Mr. Speaker.

Allan Blakeney I'm told is one of the advisers to the Premier. And it's certainly a budget that Allan Blakeney would feel comfortable with, Mr. Speaker. It's a budget about bigger government. It's not a budget, Mr. Speaker, for the people or for families or especially not for taxpayers, Mr. Speaker; but Allan Blakeney would clearly feel comfortable with the idea, Mr. Speaker, of the family of government and Crown corporations getting bigger.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the first things I recollect about Saskatchewan politics that really caught my attention, Mr. Speaker, was the 1982 budget as presented by Allan Blakeney and the NDP.

People at that time, Mr. Speaker, were losing their homes because of high interest rates, farmers were losing their farms, businesses were going under because of the high interest rates; but Allan Blakeney's theme in 1982 budget was the family of Crown corporations is strong.

And, Mr. Speaker, in 20 years nothing has changed. Blakeney is back and the message is the same: government and the Crown corporations will grow; families will leave, Mr. Speaker. That's the message that this budget presents to the people of Saskatchewan.

And the fact is, Mr. Speaker, it's not even Allan Blakeney that's the only one that's looking in his rear-view mirror. But I listen to the speeches of the members opposite — the member from Regina Dewdney, the member from Regina Wascana Plains, the member from Athabasca, the member from Saskatoon Southeast — every one of them, Mr. Speaker, is looking to the past.

And I certainly understand why, Mr. Speaker, that they want to look at the past. Every one of them, Mr. Speaker, wants to re-fight the election of 1991. It's understandable why they would want to do that. They won that election, Mr. Speaker, so everybody likes to look back nostalgically on their victories.

But what they don't want to do, Mr. Speaker, is admit any responsibility for the preceding 10 years. They don't want to admit to anything that happened from October of 1991 onwards through today. Not one iota of responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Not one iota of responsibility.

You know, you take a look . . . Ah, the member from Regina Lumsden is hollering about the debt. Well indeed, Mr. Speaker, there was a debt remaining. And I remember when Ed Tchorzewski was the minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, in the early 1990s — about '92,'93 — standing in his place next to, next, Mr. Speaker, to the . . .

The Speaker: — We will please allow the member to be heard.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy the heckling from the member from Lumsden because it doesn't say anything.

Mr. Speaker, Ed Tchorzewski was the minister of Finance and stood in his place and said yes, to this Assembly, there was a debt under Allan Blakeney. He admitted it, Mr. Speaker. Not one of the members opposite will admit it today, but it's in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, if they want to look for it. Now I understand they don't want to look for it because it doesn't suit their vision of history, Mr. Speaker. But it was there. It was there.

And it was the basis for the debt we have today, Mr. Speaker. A debt, Mr. Speaker, that continues to grow — not to shrink — continues to grow. The debt in this province has never been higher, Mr. Speaker, has never been higher than under Roy Romanow, the previous premier, of which every . . . almost every member on the opposite side was a part of his government.

The only ones, Mr. Speaker, the only individual opposite who can escape any blame for having the largest debt in Saskatchewan history is the newly elected member for Regina Elphinstone. He's the only one, Mr. Speaker, who can escape the blame for having \$21 billion of debt in this province. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, they have shrunk that debt. But it's still many billions of dollars higher — that's billions with a "b", Mr. Speaker — higher than Grant Devine ever left.

So while they may wish, Mr. Speaker, to holler and scream about it, the Provincial Auditor is very clear — the debt is higher now than it was in 1991 and continues to grow, Mr. Speaker, continues to grow. But they have done everything they can do, Mr. Speaker, to ignore the Provincial Auditor because it doesn't fit into their dream world, Mr. Speaker, into their dream world. They would rather simply just holler and try to gloss over the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina . . . from Saskatoon Southeast is always talking about doom and gloom. Doom and gloom — it seems to be, Mr. Speaker, her favourite words. Her talking trash, as the members opposite like to call it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it kind of reminds me of the Charlie Brown cartoon. You know the one where Pig Pen is moving along and he's got the cloud overtop of him, Mr. Speaker. That's sort of like the member from Saskatoon Southeast. Her life must be terribly dreary, Mr. Speaker. She always is under a cloud of doom and gloom, you know and I guess, Mr. Speaker, we have to have some sympathy for her in those cases.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are some things that she could do, that this province could do, and this government could do to

improve the situation, Mr. Speaker. The government is spending, I believe it's \$6.3 billion — \$6.3 billion this year. Very impressive number for a province as small as Saskatchewan. You know, one million people, Mr. Speaker, for the last 60 years, spending \$6.3 billion is a lot of money.

And the members opposite, I know that they're very proud of the fact that we have a million people in Saskatchewan and that we've had a million people here since the 1930s. And nothing has grown, nothing has changed, Mr. Speaker, but they're very proud of that fact.

Mr. Speaker, I think if you want to be proud of the province, what you need to be able to say is, Mr. Speaker, we grew this province from a million to a million and a half. Now that would be something to be proud of. But the members opposite are proud of the fact that they haven't grown the province.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member from Regina Albert South talk, he seemed to be very proud, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that there were now fewer taxpayers in Saskatchewan. Now I don't know of a single jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, who would be happy about the fact that there are fewer taxpayers in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, something to be proud of is to be a taxpayer. Now that's worthwhile. Being a taxpayer in any jurisdiction is something to be proud of because it means you're being successful, it means that you're providing for your community and your province, state, country — whatever the case may be. It's good citizenship, Mr. Speaker, to be able to pay taxes.

So why would the members opposite be happy that people aren't paying taxes, that there's fewer people here, Mr. Speaker, to pay taxes. That is clearly the wrong direction, Mr. Speaker. That is looking in your rear-view mirror, in your rear-view mirror, Mr. Speaker.

But what is the government's solution to creating more taxpayers? You know, are they providing opportunities for business? Are they providing reasons to be in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? No. What they're doing is hiring more government workers.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you're a government worker that's very good. You get a salary. You pay taxes. But 100 per cent of your salary comes from the taxpayer and you may be only returning 25 per cent of it. So the province has a net loss of 75 per cent of the value of your salary. That doesn't grow the economy, Mr. Speaker, that shrinks the economy.

What we need in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is an economic policy that increases the number of jobs we have available, increases the number of businesses we have available, and, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, increases the number of people we have in Saskatchewan.

The members opposite have a clear track record on the creation of jobs — they lost 13,000 last year. A clear track record on increasing the population of Saskatchewan — since 1944 when their predecessors were first elected, we have not grown, we have not grown. I think they've been in power, of those years, roughly 50 of them. So in 50 years of CCF-NDP (Co-operative

Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) government, no growth in the population of Saskatchewan.

We have built. We have many good people who have gone out and built positive, creative companies, positive and creative jurisdictions around the world but not in Saskatchewan. Because under this philosophy and this government, it is impossible to grow, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to move adjournment of debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.