

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, good morning. And I'd like to mention that this morning I'm rising on behalf of residents in the communities of Tompkins and Gull Lake in regard to their concerns about the possible implications of the Saskatchewan EMS (emergency medical services) development project. Recommendations forthcoming from that particular report are of grave concern to the people of these two communities in particular.

And the prayer reads as follows:

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 this EMS report and to affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition from citizens of the Central Plains Health District asking for the government to protect children from tobacco use.

And the petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to pass comprehensive legislation to protect children from tobacco use.

And as duty bound your petitioner will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signators on this petition are from Middle Lake; from Humboldt; Leroy; St. Benedict; Bruno, Saskatchewan; and Fulda; and there are numerous other towns within the Central Plains Health District that have submitted their signature to this petition.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present today on the EMS review:

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.

The people that have signed this petition are from Rose Valley and Wadena, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the high energy costs. The petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rate rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Melfort, and the communities of Star City, Gronlid, and Naicam.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the proposed weight restrictions on Highway 43 and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize the economic harm its plan to close Highway 43 to heavy traffic will do to south-central Saskatchewan and instead devote necessary funds to upgrade Highway 43 in order to preserve jobs and economic development in the area.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the community of Vanguard and include the name of one RM (rural municipality) from an affected municipality and a councillor.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are concerned about EMS service in Saskatchewan 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 citizens of Radville in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens who are petitioning to maintain community-based ambulance service. The prayer reads as follows:

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 improve community-based ambulance services.

The petitioners come from the communities of Wynyard, Punnichy, Leslie, and Semans.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise again on behalf of concerned citizens from southern Saskatchewan pertaining to the cuts at the 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, this petition is signed by numerous people from Assiniboia, Lafleche, Mossbank, and Coronach.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of people in Swift Current and area concerned about their regional hospital. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition 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, this petition is signed by people in Swift Current, Stewart Valley, Saskatoon, Shaunavon, Gull Lake, and Prelate.

I so present.

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.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters:

To provide necessary funding to upgrade Highway No. 43;

The consolidation and centralization of ambulance services;

A request for Swift Current for a new hospital; and

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

To the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation: for each of the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, and for each of the provincial electoral constituencies outside of these four cities: (a) which organizations received funding from the Associated Entities Fund under the cultural facilities grant program in the 1999-2000 fiscal year; (b) how much money did each of these organizations receive in the 1999-2000 fiscal year; and (c) what are the projects these organizations received funding for?

Mr. Speaker, I have an identical question referring to the year 2000 and 2001.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management: regarding support for the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association and its subsidiary clubs, what does the government plan to do to assist the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association so that it can strengthen tourism in Saskatchewan by building a safe-trail system throughout the province and maintaining same.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, The Direct Sellers Amendment Act, 2001.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce one of my constituents.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery is His Worship Mayor Tim Perry from the great city of Estevan. Mayor Perry is one of many people involved in municipal government deeply concerned about the lack of revenue sharing.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming him. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Higgins: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, not individually but as a group, seated in your west gallery.

These people represent all areas of rural and urban Saskatchewan. They are front-line workers who provide important services to the people of Saskatchewan. It's very nice to have them present in the House today, to take time on one of their days off to be in the House to observe proceedings.

So I would please encourage all members of the House to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of privilege to introduce some very important constituents from the riding of Rosetown-Biggan that I represent.

I would like to introduce the mayor of Rosetown, Alma Dubé, and also the administrator, Gary Crowder, and another assistant at Rosetown, Starla Slater. If you would please stand so that the hon. members would know who you are. Alma Dubé first and Gary Crowder and Starla Slater.

And also the mayor of Biggar is here. Blair Cleaveley. And, Blair, if you would please stand and be acknowledged.

I've had the privilege of working with these people both at the federal level and the provincial level, the communities of Rosetown and Biggar, for a number of years. They're excellent people, they do a wonderful job on behalf of the people they serve.

And I would appreciate it if you would join me in giving them a warm welcome to the Assembly this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I have a special guest to introduce to you and to all members of the House, Miss Quinn Quach was born in Vietnam and spent the next eight years of her life in Norway. And now she's at the U of R (University of Regina) taking economics and business administration. She's in her third year. And right now she's in a mentorship for women program with me and I'm very delighted to have her with me all day today.

Quinn Quach, please stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Economic Indicators

Mr. McCall: — I'm excited about the things I have to say, Mr. Speaker. Later today members will stand and be counted in the vote on the Minister of Finance's excellent budget.

Any guesses as to how I will cast my first budget vote, Mr. Speaker? Well let me save you the suspense. I will be voting for the budget because of its vision, because of its prudence, and because of its support for health, education, highways, information technology, the arts, and the environment. In short, it's a budget for the people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — I will be supporting this budget because it and previous ones have had the desired effect of keeping our economy growing and moving forward no matter what the weather, and even during these tough times for agriculture.

For instance, as you know we're a trading province, Mr. Speaker, and in 2000 our international exports increased by 25.8 per cent to \$12.5 billion. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but at home while some were crying wolf, our economy retail sales increased by 6.5 per cent this January over last January. Plenty of progress.

One more example, Mr. Speaker. Today's *Leader-Post* reports

that April land sales of oil and gas generated \$6.7 million, an 18 per cent increase over last April. Housing starts are up in Saskatoon and Regina.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I know . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tartan Day

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise on Tartan Day to offer our best wishes to the people of Scottish descent in our province. It is a day to celebrate the many contributions the Scots have made to our country and to our province.

It was my pleasure to introduce and have Tartan Day officially recognized and have the legislature pass legislation to recognize the contributions of the Scottish settlers to our province.

To celebrate the day, Mr. Speaker, the . . . (inaudible) . . . of the Scottish settlers, the Sons of Scotland Benevolent Association, will be performing and piping and Highland dancing in the second floor rotunda on April 6 — that is today, this afternoon at 1 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the legislature to join with me in congratulating the Scottish descendants to our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:15)

The Speaker: — I would just like to add to my welcome to all the guests in the legislature, but I would ask all guests that they not participate in any way directly in the proceedings. You're very welcome, however, to remain and observe for the entire day.

Canora Lounge Opening

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More good news for rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The Rise N'Shine Cafe and Snypers Lounge — that's snypers with a "y" — opened for business on March 17 of this year. These new establishments, located in Canora, with bring many new opportunities both in recreation and job creation, Mr. Speaker.

The owner of the combination café and lounge establishment, Mr. Nolan Kuruliak, hopes to start both a billiard and dart league for the people of the Canora and area. There are also hopes of receiving a new big-screen television so that pay-per-view events, the Stanley Cup playoffs, and the mighty Grey Cup can be enjoyed on a new level.

Kuruliak's establishment will employ 15 people, Mr. Speaker, including full- and part-time staff. This new business will give the people of Canora a new place to kick up their heels and relax after a hard day's work. I would like to congratulate Mr. Kuruliak, the Rise N'Shine Cafe, and the Snypers Lounge on yet another Saskatchewan success story.

Mr. Speaker, this commitment and this investment right here in Saskatchewan — it is this kind of a commitment that will help our rural areas to build. I'm sure the people of Canora will appreciate this new establishment, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to congratulate them; I'd like all members of this House to congratulate them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Melfort Hosts Western Canadian Bantam Hockey Tournament

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and members, I would like to tell you about an exciting event that'll be happening in my constituency this weekend. Participants, along with their coaches, support staff, and families, will be coming from BC (British Columbia), Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the territories to our great city, Melfort, to take part in this year's Western Canadian Bantam Hockey Tournament.

This event will involve approximately 200 volunteers working together to make it a success. I have every confidence that it will be a success because Saskatchewan people are known for their ability to do just that.

Events such as these provide a wonderful avenue for the team members to compete and improve their skills. The participants and supporters also have the opportunity to meet and enjoy the company of fellow Western Canadians.

I would ask the Assembly to join with me in congratulating Melfort on being awarded this opportunity to host the Western Canadian Bantam Hockey Tournament this weekend and wish everyone involved every success for this event. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tourism Information Kiosk System

Mr. Harper: — More good news, Mr. Speaker. Global Kiosk Systems established itself in the fall 1994 to develop and produce an interactive tourism information kiosk system at the request of local businesses. The kiosk was designed to provide tourist information on provincial events and attractions, allow credit card transactions on on-line purchases, play video promotions and advertisements, provide direct telephone access for ticket purchases, reservations and additional information.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, Global Kiosk Systems has developed an interactive ordering network for the local McDonald's Restaurants, menu kiosks for some Saskatchewan liquor board store outlets, in addition to a number of different interactive kiosk products.

Mr. Speaker, this government laid out an economic road map when it came to office. One based on innovation, technology, and the entrepreneurial spirit. I would like to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Global Kiosk Systems is living proof that that strategy is working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North East Terminal

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, farmers are innovative and independent people. They would prefer not to be reliant on government to supplement their farming operation.

Nearly a decade ago a group of farmers from the Wadena area invested their money in the North East Terminal in the hope of gaining more control over marketing of their grains. This successful privately owned agri-business has expanded to the adjoining communities of Kelvington and Rose Valley.

NET was an innovative idea and continues to show progress with strong profits and new ideas. For the year ending July 31, 2000 this agri-business realized \$480,000 in net profits. It was the first grain company to distribute a return of capital to its shareholders. NET facilities handled over 180,000 tonne of grain during the 1999-2000 crop year and did approximately \$9 million in crop inputs with each segment showing a profit.

Over the past year they focused on improving system processes and control and are proud to say that they shipped 78,000 tonnes of oats last year without a single car diverted because of quality. Over 16,000 tonnes of malt barley was shipped without a car rejection.

Mr. Speaker, this company is working for its shareholders and customers very effectively and providing superior service.

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the constituents of Kelvington-Wadena to congratulate the members and the board of this agri-business on the success of its operation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tartan Day

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Scotland's national poet, Robbie Burns once wrote, and I quote:

My love and Native land farewell,
For I maun cross the main, my dear — for I maun cross the
main.

And in 1992 in this legislature we passed a private member's Bill that provided a day of official appreciation for the clans of Scotland — the descendants of those who left their native land and came to Canada.

Many members in this Assembly voted for that Bill, you and I included, Mr. Speaker, because the contribution of the Scots to our national and our provincial life is substantial and exceptional.

Our first prime minister was MacDonald; our first premier was Scott. In the political realm this legislature has been and still is well represented by the sons and daughters of Scotland. We have had any many of M-c and M-a-c Donalds, McInnises, McIntryes and so on.

And in this day and age, Mr. Speaker, we are now graced by MacKinnons and McCalls and sons of an Angus — Addley that is — and on this day only, a McBoyd, the sponsor of the Tartan Day Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the percentage of our citizens with Scottish ancestry may be small, but over the brief life in our nation and our province, their influence for the good has been anything but small.

So in the words again of Robbie Burns on this day and all days:

May we be blessed with health and peace and sweet content.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

World Ice & Snow Sailing Association World Championship

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk today about a world championship sporting event that took place in the Arm River constituency this past March. The World Ice & Snow Sailing Association held this event on Blackstrap Lake and included 53 competitors from 10 different countries.

The event kicked off on March 6 with the opening ceremonies during which I was honoured to address the competitors and all others who attended. Organizer Barney Kenney said that the week went very well, with warm temperatures and good winds adding a special edge to the competitions.

The high speeds these athletes reached, the brightly coloured sails, was quite a remarkable sight.

I am pleased to see that Saskatchewan is drawing events like this at the world championship level. I believe that Saskatchewan can continue to attract local and international sporting events in the future. We have the places and the people to host these events.

Mr. Kenney wanted me to mention all the good people who staff Cedar Lodge which hosted the competitors and their families. He went on to say the Cedar Lodge staff went above and beyond the call of duty, and further that the meals were so good that no one wanted to go home.

All in all both competitors and spectators alike enjoyed the successful event. And it's hoped that we can host this event again in the near future.

Hats off to the numerous volunteer organizers who helped make the event a success.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Job Creation Statistics

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Premier. Yesterday we learned that the NDP (New Democratic Party) has the worst record for population

loss in the country and today, Mr. Speaker, we see why.

It's because the NDP also has the worst job creation record in the country. There are now over 11,000 fewer jobs in Saskatchewan than there were a year ago. That's the NDP record and it's a disaster — 8,400 people left the province last year; 11,000 jobs lost in the last year. That is the net result of NDP economic policy.

Mr. Speaker, why is this happening? Why is the NDP driving jobs and people out of the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well there he goes again, the sultan of gloom, helping to build our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that member to keep in mind that last March was a record month for employment with over 500,000 people working in this province, Mr. Speaker. March of 2001 recorded the second-highest level ever recorded in the month of March for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we were off from last year, it's . . . compared with last month.

But I want to say to that member that he knows full well there has been year, over year, over year of economic growth in this province beginning in 1992 right through to the year 2001. And that, Mr. Speaker, is as a result of tax initiatives. It's as a result of confidence in this economy. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it's a result of the confidence the business community has in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, this government is rowing a boat with a big leak in it and they don't even know they're sinking.

Mr. Speaker, if this was happening elsewhere, perhaps the NDP would have an excuse. But it's not. The NDP has by far the worst job creation record in the entire country — by far, Mr. Speaker.

Meanwhile other provinces are creating new jobs. Manitoba created over 5,000 jobs in the last year. Alberta created nearly 28,000 jobs in the last year. And what did the NDP do in Saskatchewan? They drove 11,000 jobs out of the province and 8,400 people left Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP so useless when it comes to creating jobs? Why is it that today they have the worst job creation record in the entire country?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the member of the . . . Leader of the Opposition was asking me questions, I was actually visiting with the North Saskatoon Business Association and the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I see in the paper here, not long ago, a little headline which says that the coalition mood is upbeat. Well I want to report to the House this morning that the mood among the north Saskatoon business community is upbeat. The mood among the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce is upbeat. The only place that we don't have an upbeat attitude is right here in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Now it's explained to me this morning why the mood over there isn't upbeat. Because yesterday, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition exposed his party's plan for the economy of Saskatchewan. Here it is, Mr. Speaker, right from *The Leader-Post*. Now listen up:

If the Saskatchewan Party wins the next election, Hermanson said the population outflow would be stemmed in a year or two and the province would then grow, if the weather and the national economy co-operated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The Leader of the Opposition will start again.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I would say to the Premier . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the Premier that the country has enjoyed good economic times. The rest of Canada is growing. Saskatchewan has had reasonably good weather and a good economy . . . should have had a good economy, but it hasn't under your government.

Mr. Speaker, the failure of the economy under your leadership also affects vital services like health and education. These important services will be unsustainable in the long run without a growing tax base. The NDP is not growing our tax base. The NDP is shrinking our tax base. Last year it was shrunk by losing 11,000 jobs in the province and 8,400 people leaving the province of Saskatchewan.

What we are seeing is a government that's growing, while the province is shrinking. That, Mr. Speaker, is a recipe for disaster, and the Premier doesn't even know it.

(10:30)

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan needs more jobs and more people. Why is the NDP driving people and jobs out of the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition should well know, who claims to be sensitive to issues in rural Saskatchewan, he should well know that in the last short period of time, we have lost in the agricultural sector

over 13,000 jobs — in the agriculture sector.

And this government is working hard — hard — to revitalize rural Saskatchewan and strengthen our agricultural sector. Outside of agriculture, Mr. Speaker, this province has 2,500 more people working this March than last March.

Now I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition the policies of this government, the economic planning of this government and the budget of this government, are not fair-weather, are not fair-weather plans. Mr. Speaker, we're not balancing . . . we're not going to cancel a balanced budget due to rain. I'll tell you that, Mr. Speaker. And we're not going to pin our hopes on letting the sunshine in, Mr. Speaker.

We've laid before this House a solid budget plan, a solid economic plan, and across the province, the mood is upbeat about this plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the other day the Premier of Saskatchewan stood in this House and said that his government sets goals and then meets those goals. That sounds good, Mr. Speaker, except it is not true.

Last election, the NDP set a goal of 30,000 new jobs. Now the Finance minister admits that there's no way they're going to meet that goal. Last week's budget set a goal of 3,800 new jobs this year. Mr. Speaker, it's now clear that that goal will not be met.

The tragic fact is the NDP is not creating jobs. The NDP is losing jobs right here in Saskatchewan. They're killing jobs, Mr. Speaker. They are driving people and jobs out of this province — 11,000 jobs lost.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP breaking its word? Why is the NDP killing so many jobs in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, a Leader of the Opposition so out of touch with what's going on in this province. Mr. Speaker, for goodness sakes the Royal Bank of Canada headquartered in Toronto knows more about what's going on in Saskatchewan than the Leader of the Opposition. They say — they're bullish on the Saskatchewan economy — they're predicting 3 per cent growth in the Saskatchewan economy this year.

The chief economist, Mr. Speaker, of Scotiabank, Mary Webb, what did she say? This is a quote, Premier Lorne Calvert's budget is "prudent" she says.

Derek Burleton, a senior economist with the TD (Toronto Dominion) Bank says:

Definitely a good grade on this one . . .

And closer to home, Mr. Speaker, closer to home. Here is the editorial opinion from the Saskatchewan . . . Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, quote:

Sooner or later the Saskatchewan Party has to figure out that its one-trick pony act, tax cuts as a solution to everything that ails the province, is going to wear thin.

They talk about jobs, Mr. Speaker, they talk about jobs. Listen to this . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate but when governments have been around too long they become blind to reality, they become blind to the facts, and, Mr. Speaker, this government is the best example I've seen in a long time of a government that doesn't know what's going on right around it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, we learned today from Statistics Canada that Saskatchewan has the worst population loss in a decade. A huge loss. Mr. Speaker, the NDP got out the old blame thrower. They blamed the Saskatchewan Party. How pathetic, Mr. Speaker. After 10 years in office, they will not take responsibility for their own record.

Today we have the worst population loss in the country. Today we have the worst loss of jobs in the country. That's the NDP record today. They have no one to blame, Mr. Speaker, no one at all except themselves and they don't realize it. You know what the problem is, this government better stop blaming others and start fixing the problem that they created.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Ten years in government, Mr. Speaker, ten years of growth. Ten years in government, ten years in government, eight balanced budgets . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — That group couldn't do it the whole time they were in government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years in government, we're described as the star of the '90s, the largest growth in per capita GDP (gross domestic product) anywhere in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — That's 10 years in government. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a foundation on which we are building for the future.

And we are not going to succumb to the doom and gloom of that small group of men and women that sit in opposition in this House. We are with the people of this province who look forward with optimism to the future of the great province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Municipalities

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the minister of Municipal Government.

Mr. Speaker, today is the day. Today is the day the minister has to decide whether to vote for the NDP's plan to grow the size of government instead of increasing municipal revenue-sharing grants. Mr. Speaker, the NDP and Liberals want to grow the size of government, and the Sask Party wants to hold the line on property taxes and grow Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, we believe that 10,000 capable government employees we have today can get the job done for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, municipalities across this province want to know, will the minister vote today . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order. Order. I think it's important that we hear the question. Order. Order. Order. Member will continue.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important they hear the question too.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities across this province want to know: will the minister vote today to grow the size of government, ignore municipalities, and drive property taxes up yet again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I just can't understand why the members opposite continue to attack civil servants that will be working to create great communities, to help young people, to work in the health care sectors, to work on highways, to create economic activities in all our small communities throughout the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — They continue to attack those people, those workers that are going to protect folks from forest fires, that are going to work in the education and health care fields.

Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why they continue to attack even when editorialists and people around the province recognize their very shallow, non-existent plans for what they would do to help grow Saskatchewan. They are attacking the small workers, the small communities throughout this province. They're not doing anything for them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I would once again respectfully request the people in the galleries not to participate in the debates in any manner whatsoever. I know people would appreciate your applause but our custom is to refrain from doing that. Thank you very much in advance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister, a Liberal, has a short memory. His plan in 1999

election was less government workers, not more, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Speaker, since the minister sent out his letter to municipalities yesterday, our support for our plan actually increased. We're receiving more letters of support than we were before. Mr. Speaker, here's one from the town of Wawota, and I quote:

We were in total support of the Sask Party's proposal that the provincial government cancel its plans to expand the civil service and instead (and instead, Mr. Speaker) use the money saved to hold the line on property taxes.

Here's another, Mr. Speaker, from the RM of Cupar:

When local governments have been forced to reorganize and prioritize service delivery, we find it difficult to accept there are no other alternatives for the province than to hire additional employees.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister take off his blinders and support the Saskatchewan Party's plan to increase revenue-sharing grants and hold the line on property taxes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the question from the former Tory, the former Liberal, now the Sask Party and perhaps supporter of the Alliance, coming at me in that respect, I just want to respond. I continue to be concerned that the opposition does not provide all the information to municipalities when they ask them to support their motion to amend the budget, Mr. Speaker.

I too have letters. I have copies of letters that were sent to the member opposite.

We will not comment on the needs of rural municipalities, nor will we presume to speak to staffing levels in the provincial public service since we, in turn, would find it unacceptable for the provincial government to instruct urban governments on staffing levels in municipal operations.

Well people . . . I have more. I have more.

We recommend that the Assembly be aware of the fact that many municipalities were unaware of the wording for the proposed amendment and they want the opportunity to discuss their support of this amendment as it is presented.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister to table his three letters because we tabled our 120.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP's scare tactics aren't working.

Since the minister sent out his letter saying he couldn't possibly

fix the roads or he couldn't possibly put out forest fires without 570 new government employees, the Sask Party has received even more letters in support of our position. Here's one from the town of Lashburn, Mr. Speaker:

Municipalities have maintained services while keeping our costs low. The province should do the same. It is not possible for the government to maintain services without expanding the size of service.

Here's another one from the RM of Flett's Springs:

The council supports the motion urging the province to cancel its plans to expand the civil service and instead use the money to provide . . .

The Speaker: — Would the member put the question please.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, will the minister demonstrate he's listening? Will he vote to increase municipal revenue-sharing grants by \$30 million today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to table these letters for the members opposite, but I want to read another one first of all, from the town of Raymore.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. We should also be able to hear the response.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to quote from this letter before I table these three:

We do not support . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — We have more, Mr. Speaker. Do they want more?

We do not support the portion of your motion to eliminate 570 positions in communities across Saskatchewan.

I'll table these, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to read you a news release from people that are hard-working people in this province:

About 570 full-time equivalent positions were added to the public service although the precise number of actual new jobs, the spinoffs from these people working in our small communities, paying taxes, buying goods and services . . .

Mr. Speaker, those people do not want this province, our communities, which I respect very much, they do not want them to prosper.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, more than 120 letters from municipalities across this province — every one of them support an increase in municipal

revenue-sharing grants to hold the line on property taxes. The vast majority state full support for the Saskatchewan Party amendment, and a few municipalities are proposing the money for revenue sharing be taken from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party believes the 10,000 capable government employees we now have, have the ability to do the job. We think it's more responsible to work with the resources we already have than to grow government.

(10:45)

But, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP doesn't like our plan, will the minister tell municipalities what his plan is for increasing municipal revenue-sharing grants this year? Or is the NDP simply going to ignore municipalities and drive up property taxes once again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I created a stir when I said I would table letters. The letter I'm quoting from here, Mr. Speaker, is from the president of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association). He represents the small towns and communities.

And now, what I would ask the member opposite to do is table, table the letter and the information that they sent to the mayors and municipalities. I'd like to see that tabled and see if they were upfront with the folks in the information they presented to them.

Mr. Speaker, highways and social services, our biggest budget ever for highways to fix our highways, our education, the reduction in business taxes — all these are good news for people in those communities and municipalities that will be working, will be contributing to the success and growth of those communities and this great province of ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Workers' Compensation Board

Mr. Weekes: — My question is for the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker.

The WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) is still saying today that spending \$7,000 on a farewell party for the former chairman is a good idea. CEO (chief executive officer), Peter Federko, says it's appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, businesses who fund the WCB and many injured workers have been treated with contempt by the WCB in the past. Now the minister knows what it feels like because the WCB is treating him in the same way. They are refusing to be accountable to the businesses who fund them. They are refusing to be accountable to the workers. And they are refusing to be accountable to the minister who appoints their board.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: who is in charge of the WCB and who is accountable to the public for their actions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand in this legislature today and to say that the issue of Mr. Stan Cameron's noon hour luncheon that would have caused the closure of Workers' Compensation Board and caused the cessation of service to injured workers, that farewell luncheon will not happen.

I'm saying unequivocally that the board and the minister are in total agreement on that issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, the public wants some answers. The WCB chairman leaves and is paid a \$150,000 severance package. The WCB plans a \$7,000 retirement party for him, which is now cancelled because they say the timing isn't right. Four top management officials are fired without cause and the WCB refuses to release how much severance they receive.

Since at least February the minister has had in his possession the Dorsey report which examines the operations and policies of the WCB but hasn't made it public. It's absolutely appalling that the WCB and the minister are treating the stakeholders of the Workers' Compensation Board in this manner. They want to know, they deserve to know what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, if the WCB won't explain their actions, then the minister should. To the minister: will he explain to the stakeholders and the public the less than accountable actions of the WCB?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I'm astounded at two things. One the new-found concern that members opposite have for fiscal responsibility. That I find astounding. But coming from the member that says unions are job killers, I find any question about labour and working people to be repulsive.

Mr. Speaker, Stan Cameron served as chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board for nearly eight years. Stan Cameron moved the board forward in a great many ways and deserves our respect, deserves a suitable retirement function, and it is my hope that he will get it. What I have shared is that the noon hour shutdown of compensation boards stopping service to injured workers was inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, this issue I think is closed at this point. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 212 — The Balanced Budget Act, 2001

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would move first reading of Bill No. 212, The Balanced Budget Act, 2001.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be

read a second time at the next sitting.

**Bill No. 12 — The Water Corporation
Amendment Act, 2001**

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 12, The Water Corporation Amendment Act, 2001 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

**Bill No. 13 — The Class Actions Act/
Loi sur les recours collectifs**

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 13, the Class Actions Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of a very accountable and forward government, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to table the answers to written questions no. 11 through 52 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Questions 11 through to 52 are hereby tabled.

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.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday when members opposite waved the white flag and we curtailed the debate, I was talking about a management style, a management style which I referred to as the inverted Coke bottle syndrome which I am very familiar with. And that's the type of style that this government is using.

And when I say I'm very familiar with this style of management, Mr. Speaker, in my past career we operated within that style of an inverted Coke bottle. But the reason is, and there's one fundamental difference, is in the military you operate with a large group of people at the higher end of the spectrum, a lot of middle management, but in time of crisis you have to immediately be able to expand to upwards of a million people in time of crisis.

So now what I look at, this government is operating with a large group of people at the top as in the inverted Coke bottle; a large in the middle; very, very small number of workers . . . room to

expand but nobody to expand with. We could not expand to a million people in this province, Mr. Speaker.

An example of this is what I used yesterday, right from the NDP's own press release: 54 new positions in Social Services — 9 for management supervisory, 25 administrative, but only 20 workers. Now that fits right into this plan very, very well.

Mr. Speaker, my concern . . . my concern, when we talk about the 570 civil servants that we're looking at hiring or the NDP is looking at hiring, I wonder where they actually fit into this inverted Coke bottle. I know members opposite get up and say that we are the ones that want to cut these positions.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how can we cut them, we're not government. Also they don't exist, so how can we be purporting to cut them. But, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the minister . . . the Minister of Municipal Affairs' release, he says 83 forest fire jobs . . . forest fighting jobs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask where these fit into the structure. Do they know something that we don't know? Are there more forest fires going to come this year than last? Where in fact do they fit into the structure?

Mr. Speaker, I also have a little concern with this, other than the \$50 million. We look at what's given by members opposite as they're hiring. Well the total that I see on this is 304 positions, Mr. Speaker. Doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that leaves 266 that are not identified. We know where one is, so that basically means 265 more hacks and flacks to be hired. And those are the words of the Liberal members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to just touch base . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would just ask the Assembly just to settle down a little bit. Just lower the level a little bit, please. I would like to hear the words of the member who's got the floor.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as others have mentioned, I would like to applaud the budget where it deserves some applause and that's in highways, the money going into highways. Everybody in rural Saskatchewan and in the urban centres knows that we need money in highways and roads.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is where this money will go. As I just explained this inverted Coke bottle style of management, how much is actually going to get to the roads. And that's a concern. We have a real concern and I have very much of an interest as to where the rubber meets the road, that's where we want the money to go.

Interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to quote from the Regina *Leader-Post*, on Saturday, March 31:

The increased funding in the highways sector is great. But if we don't put increased funding into our rural road network, the system is not going to work.

With the centralization of railroads, with the centralization of schools, hospitals, we need a good road system.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope that we get that money to the roads.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn my comments now to health for a couple of minutes. It's interesting for me to see that we're throwing a lot more money into health which, if it hits the front line workers, I really applaud that. But again, I have a fear it's going to be bottled up in this bureaucracy.

(11:00)

Mr. Speaker, I've raised it in the House in question period and in petitions, but I have very much of a concern for people in the Assiniboia area with the Pioneer Lodge. It's downsizing; beds have closed.

We have a government that refuses to listen to the people of the province. We had some 275 people out, mostly seniors, to listen to the concerns. I listened to the concerns and nothing is being done.

Mr. Speaker, one of my concerns is, now we've put more money into the health system, I'm wondering if it's going to help places such as Assiniboia. And, Mr. Speaker, I would gather that it is not. And the reason is when we were at the meeting in Assiniboia, one concerned citizen stood up and said to the CEO (chief executive officer), if we raise the money to put the renovations into the Pioneer Lodge in Assiniboia, would you keep it open? And the answer was no.

So even the money that's going into Health now I'm not so certain is going to help a lot of us people in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked about EMS an awful lot, but I just want to read a letter that was sent to the Minister of Health. And there's just a part of it here I would like to read, and it concerns EMS system. A lot of our rural people, and probably urban people too, are volunteers as first responders. And this lady has wrote, and I quote:

There must be thousands of people in Saskatchewan who volunteer their time for training and calls to be First Responders. They probably do it for their friends and neighbors instead of the government but they are aiding our health care system. Never once have I heard a word of praise from the government for their dedication. 'Shame on you.'

Please consider very carefully, talk to ambulance service and health districts and think about people who need the service before you make changes. Remember someday it may be you laying in a ditch, a meeting room or anywhere in Saskatchewan waiting for an ambulance. Make sure you can live with any changes that are made.

Mr. Speaker, that's a sentiment that is felt throughout rural Saskatchewan with reference to the ambulance system.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also now like to comment for the next couple of minutes on rural revitalization. It's very, very interesting to me. A big plan for rural revitalization — \$800,000 and an office in Regina.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that fits in with the Premier's plan. And the

reason I say that is the Premier has campaigned, had campaigned on his reconnection with rural Saskatchewan by getting a bus, loading the cabinet up, and going into rural Saskatchewan to get in touch with the people.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from *Hansard* on March 29 where the Premier says:

Mr. Speaker, the member from Wood River has (some concerns) some question about my bus. Well I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker, my bus started rolling — my bus started rolling — in Elphinstone, and then it rolled through Riversdale . . .

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I've ever heard that Elphinstone and Riversdale are considered rural areas . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I could go on an awful lot more with the rural revitalization and issues that are very much of a concern to rural Saskatchewan, but I wish to save some time so I'm going to close my remarks out with a statement from *The StarPhoenix* of March 31, and it says:

Rather than connecting to the future, Cline's budget succeeded in compounding the confusion. Given the resources at his disposal it looks as if Cline opted to create a war chest for an election the NDP will have to fight in the near future, rather than thinking about what's best for the province's future.

Mr. Speaker, to me it's very obvious that this government has set a very, very low standard for itself and still fails to achieve it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bakken: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to have the mayor of Weyburn with us in the gallery, in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, Don Schlosser. He's a long-time businessman in Weyburn and a great promoter of Weyburn. And he's very concerned about property taxes in his city as are many other mayors and reeves in this province.

And so I'd like the rest of the members of the legislature to help me welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — With leave to recognize guests, Mr.

Speaker.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the leave. I want to also join with the member from Weyburn in welcoming Mayor Schlosser to the Assembly this afternoon . . . or this morning. I've had the opportunity over the years to meet with His Worship, both as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and now Agriculture, because the community of Weyburn has been very aggressive and forward looking in terms of what we can do in that part of Saskatchewan to enhance and grow the agricultural industry.

So I want to extend my welcome to the Assembly today and continued good work as we grow the agricultural industry in your part of the province, sir. Thank you.

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. Mr. Hagel: — Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, and I join with the hon. member in recognizing and welcoming the guests in the gallery today.

Well, Mr. Speaker, before I get into my remarks related specifically to the budget debate, let me take just a moment to extend my personal congratulations to you, sir, upon assuming the important office of Speaker of the House.

You know the tremendous respect that I hold for the office. And let me simply say that I am extremely confident that recognizing your proud and lengthy contribution to our system of parliamentary democracy and commitment to principle, that you will serve us well not only in the proceedings of the House here, but as representative of the full Legislative Assembly in a whole range of duties. And I congratulate you on achieving this important position, voted democratically by a majority vote of the members of the House.

I'd also like to extend my congratulations to the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair of Committees. And I would simply say I stand confident that we will be served well by the presiding officers of the House.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I will want to use my brief amount of time to spend most of my remarks focused on the budget and its focus on the use of resources of taxpayers of Saskatchewan related to Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training.

But before I do that, I just simply cannot ignore the remarks of the hon. member for Wood River who just preceded me. And I

must admit that I take great issue with two of the points, and I think they are key points in this budget as I listen to his debate.

We share, Mr. Speaker, a significantly different views on what this budget does relative to both income tax as well as the employment of people in the public service of Saskatchewan.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, it was with a bit of alarm that I listened to the hon. member for Wood River. And recognizing that in this budget we are continuing an agenda, Mr. Speaker, which involves the largest tax reduction in the history of Saskatchewan. That the beginning of this year, we saw the elimination of the flat tax, the deficit surtax, and the high-income surtax. And then I listen to the hon. member for Wood River say he was disappointed that income tax was going down.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think he shares the view of the people of Saskatchewan. He certainly does not share the view of the Government of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are of the view in our tax agenda we're heading in the right direction. And I and the members of the government stand firmly with the people of Saskatchewan and opposed to the position of the member for Wood River.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard as well the hon. member say that the implications of this budget which involve the increase of 571 positions of public service employees is something to which he is strongly opposed. And in fact we will vote later this morning on an amendment, Mr. Speaker, an amendment moved by the member of the opposition. So it's not only the hon. member for Wood River opposing that implication to this budget.

Mr. Speaker, let me just put on the record what those positions are. Because the hon. members opposite would like to paint that as these being some kind of nameless, faceless administrative kinds of positions, Mr. Speaker. And let me outline what these speakers . . . what these position are, Mr. Speaker, that is in this budget. And I'll invite the hon. members to just pay careful attention and then to comment which specifically of these they do not approve of, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this budget we have 88 positions to account for workload pressures in forest firefighting. We have 86 positions to increase highways construction and repair. We have 71 positions to account for workload pressures in corrections for secure prisoner transport.

Mr. Speaker, there's 60 positions to respond to the Child Advocate's report on Social Services. I hear the hon. member, the hon. critic for Social Services. I ask, does she not support the addition of 60 workers as recommended by the Children's Advocate? Stand in your place and say you're opposed to that, if you are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, there are 26 positions to recognize the IT (information technology) services and labour market research services that were previously outsourced in

Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training that we're bringing into permanent employment.

Mr. Speaker, there are 15 positions to recognize the Aboriginal employment initiatives in the Public Service Commission. Are you opposed to that?

Mr. Speaker, 16 positions to increase tax auditors and tax collectors to make sure that we're doing a proper job of collecting the taxes that are owed. Seventeen positions for new adoptive initiatives in agriculture to help farmers take advantage of opportunities and convert marginal land to forage. Seventeen positions for Energy and Mines to expand oil, gas, and mining industry and to address environmental concerns. Are you opposed to those?

Eighteen positions for Education to enhance learning opportunities. Fifteen positions for Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management and Health for quality of water compliance. Ten positions for an immigration initiative to encourage qualified immigrants to locate in Saskatchewan. Ten and a half positions, Mr. Speaker, in Labour to address the occupational health and safety concerns and labour relations.

Mr. Speaker, 30 positions to automate and improve service in the corporations branch, prosecutions service, and the public trustee. Eight positions for the Royal Saskatchewan Museum for development of the life services gallery. Seventeen positions for the new Culture, Youth and Recreation department. Eight positions for the new Rural Revitalization department. And 58 other positions to new programs and program expansions.

Which of those, Mr. Speaker, do the hon. members stand opposed to? We are proud of the work of the public service employees of Saskatchewan, on this side. And we are confident that this will increase the quality of service to the people of Saskatchewan, and the public service employees will do that well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — So, Mr. Speaker, there they are. There they are. Those are the positions that are in this budget. A budget, Mr. Speaker, which I am proudly standing in my place to say I support because it gives Saskatchewan . . . the people, Saskatchewan people the tools to connect, participate, to communicate, and to compete.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at what's in this budget, we find ourselves having to admit, Mr. Speaker, that it captures the true Saskatchewan spirit, which is all about opportunity. And this is a budget, Mr. Speaker, which invests in education and technology, the foundation of our plan to connect Saskatchewan to the future.

Mr. Speaker, I've said it many times, in the world of post-secondary education we are in the future business. It is our job to use the resources provided by the people of Saskatchewan to connect the people to their future in our province.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I would just like to remind the hon. members that the Minister of Post-Secondary

Education has the floor. Most hon. members have had a chance to participate in the budget debate. And I'd ask that we allow the Minister of Post-Secondary Education to be heard by us all, please.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise to me that the hon. members opposite are a tad troubled by what they're hearing when they get a statement of the fact, Mr. Speaker. But we won't go there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education is a priority for this government. And this is a good news budget for the people of Saskatchewan. And included in that, the post-secondary sector which receives an increase, Mr. Speaker, of \$17.5 million overall, included in that a 3.5 per cent increase, \$9.8 million for our public institutions.

In addition to the operating grants that go to our institutions, Mr. Speaker, there's investment in capital. And I would point out to the House, Mr. Speaker, that the capital investment in the last three years has been \$108 million invested in capital in the province of Saskatchewan, the large, large bulk of that to our universities. And included in that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is some accelerated payments in the capital just at the tail end of the last fiscal year.

(11:15)

This as well, Mr. Speaker, a budget which supports income . . . learners who need income support. It will be a surprise to some, I suspect, Mr. Speaker, to note that when you combined the commitments in this budget to student loans, to Saskatchewan bursaries, to the provincial training allowance and skills training, that there is \$74 million, Mr. Speaker, in this budget in income support to learners.

There is also in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, a new program, a half a million dollars, to be matched by our post-secondary institutions, for a merit-based scholarship to ensure that the best and the brightest of Saskatchewan's high school graduates will make their studies here in our province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I point out to the hon. members, and I know it's strongly supported by the hon. members opposite, because if I recall the resolutions of their . . . of the SP's (Saskatchewan Party) last annual convention, they took a strong position in support of the post-secondary graduate tax credit. And I'm glad to see that they share the pride that we have here, being the first in Canada to take that initiative. Mr. Speaker, we'll continue that.

And I just simply report that in February we mailed out some 10,000 graduate tax certificates to graduates in Saskatchewan, which, Mr. Speaker, will provide to them a \$350 reduction in their Saskatchewan income tax, payable when they establish themselves here in Saskatchewan.

I will also advise the House, Mr. Speaker, that we have . . . in addition to the fact that we have the best student loan program in all of Canada right now, we're working to make that better. And I anticipate, in the not too distant future, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make some announcements regarding the . . . improving

the best program in the area of interest relief and debt reduction.

It's also maybe of interest to note, Mr. Speaker, that of some \$62 million lent in the last year to Saskatchewan students, loans that are here in Saskatchewan, \$29 million of that was forgiven. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that is a strong statement of the support for low-income students here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that we're in the future business and we are. And part of that is technology, and that was certainly emphasized in the budget. And it is also a part of the important investment in this budget in post-secondary.

We will be announcing in a more formal way, later on in the session, Mr. Speaker, "campus Saskatchewan", the virtual campus for our province. There is in this budget, an additional investment of . . . an additional \$2.5 million, bringing the total investment to the use of technology for on-line education and related services. Mr. Speaker, a tripling over the budget of last year, and in fact, an increase by tenfold over two years ago.

So clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is a department in the government that is investing in technology, specifically in the delivery of post-secondary training, bringing the campus to the student, Mr. Speaker. But when I say that, not only through our rural and northern regional colleges but in fact, I think increasingly, we're going to find that on the campuses themselves, that we will have a mix of on-campus and on-line delivery.

I followed very carefully, Mr. Speaker, I attended the national committee . . . the national council of ministers of education of Canada, just earlier, which is my pleasure and my honour to Chair, and we are looking very closely at the recent report of the National Advisory Committee on On-line Learning. And Saskatchewan will be positioning ourselves to take advantage of investments not only in this province but other provinces and nationally in the interest of post-secondary students in the years ahead.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're also adding in this budget one and a half million dollars going to our universities and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) to expand the training capacity for informational technology and professionals. Some 250 new computer science training opportunities coming on stream there.

Mr. Speaker, people in rural and northern Saskatchewan remain committed to the regional colleges as an important vehicle to bring the campus to the student and the use of SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network). And both of those, Mr. Speaker, the rural and northern regional colleges and SCN receive increases in the budget here to assist in that regard.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're targeting training in a number of ways to deal with the advancement of our economy. Let me simply say, because I know my time is short, that increased investments and forestry training — 250 training positions last year funded, Mr. Speaker, increased to 290 this year — most of those being northern and Aboriginal workers who are involved there. 25,000 training employment opportunities across the province in a whole host of ways; regional colleges playing a very important role as we use the JobStart, Future Skills, and

other programs to connect workers to employment building their futures and the future of our province.

Now when we look at the future, Mr. Speaker, in this province we cannot look at it with optimism without concentrating on the important role that our Aboriginal peoples play. As the nation will experience a decline in this decade, the availability of skilled employees in our labour market, Saskatchewan has one natural competitive advantage and it's our Aboriginal peoples, Mr. Speaker. And we must support and enhance that.

We have \$7 million to our unique and uniquely successful Aboriginal institutions in this budget. Mr. Speaker, we'll have more to say about this later in the session as well, but we'll be seeing emphasis on northern nursing training expanded and introduced to meet Saskatchewan's important needs in the year 2002 and we'll be announcing some positioning to get ready for that later in the session.

Mr. Speaker, as well, we have the expansion of Aboriginal training in the Apprenticeship Commission, Mr. Speaker, and summer jobs, Mr. Speaker. Doubling of the tax credit for students will mean that students making over \$11,000 will pay absolutely no income tax, Mr. Speaker.

All of those in the budget, Mr. Speaker. I would love to continue. This list is long, but I do want to respect the agreements that have been made between members of the House to enable speeches to be made today. And so having said that, Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that I stand proud of the record of this government, I stand proud of this budget. I stand proud of the plans of post-secondary sector, and I will be voting against the amendment and strongly in favour of the motion to adopt the budget of the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjørnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to take part in the debate on the budget this year.

There are many similarities I feel with last year's budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think we saw last year where the Minister of Finance tried to portray to the people of Saskatchewan that they'd actually lowered taxes, and in essence and in the final outcome, they'd actually raised taxes.

What we see this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is really not much difference except this year they forgot to lower the taxes first before they decided to raise the taxes. And by that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I'm talking about is property taxes. And how are they going to raise those property taxes? They're going to raise those property taxes by not increasing revenue sharing for the municipalities of this province.

The municipalities of this province have been downloaded on — whether it's cities, towns, villages, or RMs — have been downloaded on by that NDP government for 10 years now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Ten years this has gone on. And what many municipalities are saying to us now is we took the pain, now it's time to see the gain.

And did they see it in this budget? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they did not see it. They saw no relief after 10 years of cuts to municipalities, absolutely no relief, and have no alternative but to raise property taxes or cut services.

Now I find that funny, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because what is the government of the day doing at the same time? They're asking local municipalities to be put in that spot — either raise property taxes or to cut services which would probably mean cutting employees. This government is saying they want to go out and hire 570 more employees.

You know what that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's don't do as I do, do as I say. Pay absolutely no attention to what we're doing; this is what you're going to have to do. This has gone on far too long, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to quote from some of the letters that we've received to the amendment we put into the budget. And I quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this letter comes from the office of the mayor, city of North Battleford. And I quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Dear Mr. Bjornerud:

To do with the amendment to the 2001 provincial budget, the city of North Battleford supports your amendment and is hopeful that the Government of Saskatchewan will accept your proposal.

I wish to identify that municipal governments requested \$20 million in additional funding, revenue-sharing grants this year, with an infusion of funds in the future years.

They're already talking next year they need more. That's from North Battleford, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Sticking with the cities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, city of Estevan, Tim Perry, mayor:

Dear Mr. Bjornerud (and I'm quoting again):

The City of Estevan completely supports the amendment (completely supports the amendment) recommended by the Saskatchewan Party to the 2001 Provincial Budget calling on the Provincial Government to provide an additional \$30 million in municipal revenue sharing grants this year.

Municipal Revenue Sharing Grants are vital and we support . . . (the) request for . . . (more money this year).

That was the city of Estevan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

City of Yorkton. The Deputy Premier I think would be very interested in what they have to say:

Dear Mr. Bjornerud (and I'm quoting, Mr. Deputy Speaker):

I want to thank you on behalf of the taxpayers of the City of Yorkton for making an effort to seek new funds for our Municipalities.

I would point out that we have been seeking \$20 million in additional funds through SUMA but I am sure if you were able to obtain \$30 million we would be most happy to put those funds to work in our province.

I, like several of my fellow City Mayors, was very disappointed to learn that we were not even recognized in last week's budget. (Not even recognized, the mayor is saying.) I believe it is the communities of this province which offer the "Quality of Life" which the Minister spoke . . . (of). I also believe the Ministers comment . . . that's "progress" does not fit when it comes to Cities, Towns and Villages.

I say this because the Provincial Government is giving back some money, but then because of our lack of municipal funding, this forces the municipality to take those savings back at the local level. This is counter productive in my opinion.

I'm still quoting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the mayor of Yorkton:

We have seen our funding levels in Yorkton slide from a high in 1989 of \$1.358 million to a low of \$560 thousand in 1999.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's about a third of it was in 1989. He goes on to say:

I have enclosed a spreadsheet showing our funding from the province from 1984 to 2000.

And I don't have time to read through it all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but these numbers show that the downloading — and the Deputy Premier will be very interested in this because it comes from the city of Yorkton — that that government, that minister, has been part of the downloading on the city of Yorkton since 1991 till the year 2001 today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to go on now and talk to . . . talk about other situations we have here. I'd like to maybe move over though and talk about towns in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And as the minister of Municipal Government talked today about his three letters, here's what we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the towns, and I'll start on that pile.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I quote the town of Luseland. I know the members opposite are just glued to hear what I have to say over here. They want to hear it. Listen to this, members:

Dear Bob: (I'm quoting)

The Council in the Town of Luseland are also disappointed in the lack of funding for Municipal Government in the 2001 Budget as presented by the current administration. The increases in energy costs (and we hear this a lot in these letters) alone constitute a need for increased Revenue Sharing. We, as a Council are trying to survive . . .

And I repeat that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is important:

We, as a Council are trying to survive in a rural setting by encouraging families to stay and use the public facilities in this community.

We are doing our part and have taken the brunt of the balancing of the provincial budget. It is time the Provincial Government shared some of the extra revenues they have received with small Urban Municipalities.

The letters continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The town of Balcarres, minister of Municipal Government would be interested in that.

Town of Eston, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'll quote:

The Town of Eston supports your request for additional funding to be provided in revenue sharing grants.

The amounts we received in 2000 was \$43,277 or about 3.8 per cent of our revenues.

In 1989, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they received over \$120,000 — 11.5 per cent of their revenue. They've been cut down to about a third.

We made up for the reduction in grant by a combination of delaying some projects and increasing the local mill rate.

In 2001 we are faced with a major increase in natural gas costs, particularly in our arena and swimming pool. These costs will have to be shared by increased user fees, with a potential loss in participation, and an increased mill rate.

And as I was saying before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what we're talking about — increased taxes.

(11:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on and on and on here. All these letters are from the towns, and there's many of them. I go on, though. It doesn't stop there.

We have the RMs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a whole pile of letters from the RMs in exactly the same position — no choice but to raise taxes, cut services, raise taxes. Get into the villages, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and again we have a whole long list of villages that are very concerned.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think by now that you get the message of what we're trying to say on this side is that municipalities across this province want a share in the windfall that this province has saw this year. We're suggesting not increasing the size of government, not hiring new employees, living within the boundaries of the employees you have now. If you have to restructure somewhat, move employees from one department to another. That's what municipalities have done for the last 10 years.

They haven't had the luxury of raising taxes unless it's been absolutely necessary. They don't run out and hire new employees every time they feel the urge. They have to find ways of restructuring to justify that. And that's what we're asking this government to do today — take a look at refunding,

replenishing revenue sharing, working within that budget.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as this week's gone on, I think it's become very clear that the people of Saskatchewan, the municipalities within this province, agree with us that the government should live within its boundaries, not hire new employees — live with the 10,000 quite capable employees they have now. If it takes restructuring, do that. Live within those boundaries, but increase revenue sharing to the municipalities of this province.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to the coalition government's budget for 2001-02.

As with every provincial budget my colleague the Minister of Finance had to balance the legitimate requests to enhance program spending with paying down the debt and providing tax relief. And he had to balance the legitimate interests of all sectors — education, agriculture, health, highways infrastructure and more.

I am pleased with the results. This is a very good budget for education. This is a very good budget for the people of Saskatchewan, and I'm very proud to be able to participate in the debate with regard to this budget.

Last year's budget for Education, as originally presented and ultimately passed by this Legislative Assembly, was good, was very good for education and the people of this province. Over the course of last year, we provided significant additional financial resources in response to changing circumstances. We provided the necessary additional funding to address the new teachers' collective agreement, which was only concluded halfway through the fiscal year. We made that commitment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we met that commitment in full.

We also provided a further 5.6 million by way of special warrant for compensatory operating grants to school divisions adversely affected by assessment appeals mandated by the Court of Appeal. So we put in that additional 5.6 million because it was needed by those school divisions.

For calendar 2000, the actual effective amount of provincial financial support through the foundation operating grant, not including the one-time compensatory payment of 5.6 million, increased by \$29 million. That is more than twice of the annual increase in the past 15 years. That was a tough act to follow, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very tough to follow.

But our education partners were very clear in telling us that the coalition government had to invest in education. Indeed, our colleagues with the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, for example, were very specific. They wanted to see at least 32 million added to the foundation operating grant, the grants that go to school boards. Mr. Speaker, we listened to our partners and we heard them.

In this year's budget, we provided a substantial increase over

and above the substantial increase last year. The grant pool for the calendar year 2001 is 460.1 million, an increase of 33.7 million. This is the largest operating grant increase in the province of Saskatchewan in 15 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's an increase of almost 8 per cent, in a year when inflation is projected to be less than 2 per cent.

On a budget-to-budget basis, as distinct from the calendar year basis which school divisions look at as apples to apples, the increase to the grant pool for last year's budget is 40.7, or 9.6 per cent, bringing the total to 466.8 million this fiscal year.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the most recent round of collective bargaining, the development of a new extended health benefits insurance plan was an important item for teachers. In accordance with that new agreement, the provincial government is providing all of that \$9.3 million in this budget for this new insurance plan.

This upcoming year will be the final year of the phase-in for the provincial payment of grants in lieu of taxes to local governments. In this coming year the amounts paid to school divisions will increase by an additional \$2 million, to a total annual of \$7 million additional dollars going to school divisions.

Our partners also ask us to expand programs and services to help the most vulnerable children in our society. Mr. Speaker, we again listen to our partners and we have heard them.

Last month, Mr. Speaker, I accepted the final report of the task force on the role of the school, called School^{PLUS}, A Vision for Children and Youth. Under the leadership of Dr. Michael Tymchak of the University of Regina, the task force has set a vision for the future of education in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that all members will join me in thanking and acknowledging all the task force members for the dedication and good work they have provided to this challenging task. We recognize the significance of their work and the impact it will have on the future of education, our communities, the future successes of our students, and the improved work environment for classroom professionals and support staff, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Role of the School Task Force recommended an expansion of the pre-kindergarten program in the range of 25 to 50 per cent would be reasonable. Our pre-kindergarten program implemented in 1997 has been very successful in supporting at-risk children in their critical early years. Consistent with the recommendations of the Role of the School Task Force, we are substantially increasing our pre-kindergarten financial support and increasing the number of pre-kindergarten spaces — and listen to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker — by more than 80 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Saskatchewan's award-winning community schools program has long been recognized as an effective model for meeting the complex educational needs of at-risk students.

Since 1995 we have doubled the number of community schools.

The task force on the role of the school recently lent its voice to the chorus of others in praise of this province's community schools program. They said, and I quote:

The community school program is one of the most helpful and hopeful changes to be initiated in recent times. Given its remarkable success and evident benefits not only for children but for parents and the whole community, the task force is of the view that the time has come for a major community school initiative in our province.

In its final report, the task force recommended an increase of 26 community schools over the next three years. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this coming year we are more than doubling right now the number of community schools.

We are enhancing this successful program by increasing the number of new community schools by more than 40 and expanding into rural communities as well as secondary schools.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — This is great news, great news for the children of this province and great news for the people of Saskatchewan.

This year the Department of Education is making a major contribution in support of the government strategy for early childhood development. The purpose of the strategy is to foster children's healthy growth and development by providing for a continuum of integrated early intervention supports and services to better prepare preschool children for their educational experience.

We are taking an integrated provincial approach involving a number of provincial departments including Education, Health, and Social Services. There will be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, provincial leadership of this critical initiative which will be administered at the local level through school divisions and health districts. School divisions and health districts will work with communities and local community-based agencies to ensure our children have the support they need to be successful in life.

The Education budget this coming year includes \$1.6 million explicitly identified for the early childhood development initiative. The total amount identified for this initiative this year will be 10 million, rising to a total of 73 million over the next five years. This is Saskatchewan's share of the federal financing announced last fall.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is also important that we continue to provide direct provincial policy and financial support to our northern rural and urban school divisions to support culturally affirming educational programs for First Nations and Metis students in our classrooms.

This year we are providing an increase of more than 90 per cent in our financial support for Aboriginal education programming through the operating grant formula. This includes increased support for the Indian and Metis educational development program, the Aboriginal elders outreach, and financial support for innovative partnerships between school divisions and

Aboriginal communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, a little more than a year ago I received the final report of the special education review, Directions for Diversity. Our response to the special education review was called Strengthening Supports. This budget reflects a strong commitment to make that a reality for special needs and at-risk students.

There are two important changes in our support for special education, together entailing a significant increase in provincial financial support through the operating grant program.

First, there's a 20 per cent increase in support for designated students with disabilities. In this upcoming new budget year, our total supplementary financial support for these students will be more than double what it was just a scant four years ago.

Second, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be combining several programs into a new diversity program and increasing our financial support in that area by over 25 per cent.

These enhancements are in keeping with the recommendations of the special education review. We heard the committee. This year the recognized expenditures for all categories of special education increased by 32 per cent, from 82 million to 108 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Since 1995, when the provincial budget was balanced, our special education recognition has risen sharply from 48 million to 108 million — an increase of 127 per cent.

Our education partners talked to us about the need to enhance the use of technology in our education system. Mr. Speaker, we have again listened to our education partners and we have heard them. Saskatchewan Education will be building on our past state-of-the-art learning technology initiatives, such as the Evergreen Curriculum, with some exciting new developments.

First, Mr. Speaker, CommunityNet — high-speed Internet connectivity for all Saskatchewan schools. For school divisions this means much better Internet access and lower costs. We will cover the 3.7 million cost of connecting all provincial schools over the next three years, and school divisions will immediately receive a benefit of \$1.5 million by the provincial government taking on this connective cost.

Connectivity through the Centenary Fund. We will be providing a further 2 million per year over the next three years for improved in-school distribution. So we're bringing the Internet to the schools and we're covering the costs of distributing. That's progress, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — With regard to content in this budget, we have provided 3 million additional dollars in direct financial support for the development of a made-in-Saskatchewan, on-line learning resource to be initiated and developed by teachers and school divisions and of course the needed jobs to support that initiative, Mr. Speaker.

(11:45)

This set of initiatives will benefit all Saskatchewan students, and particularly those in northern and isolated schools.

Our partners told us about the particular needs and challenges for rural education. They wanted to see specific initiatives to support rural education. Mr. Speaker, we again listened to our partners and we have heard them.

We have worked with education leaders over the past year to see how we could build on the success of our shared services program which provides specialized supports to teachers and students in our schools. We will now be implementing those improvements including a 90 per cent increase in provincial support for shared services, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — And we are making changes to the way the grant recognizes rural transportation costs, as well as adding a new isolated schools factor to help address the challenges of providing quality education in isolated areas in Saskatchewan.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have also allocated \$1 million of support for teacher recruitment, particularly in northern Saskatchewan, and recruitment of specialist teachers in rural school divisions. The well-being of rural Saskatchewan has been a particular focus of this coalition government and a particular focus of this budget, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to our support for rural schools and rural students, there is a great deal in this budget to support rural citizens and rural communities. The education property tax rebate on ag land will continue this year. And we recently extended the deadline for both 2000 and 2001 rebate years to February 15, 2002.

We are investing 312 million in highways, including 25.4 million to advance the time frame for twinning the Trans-Canada West from 2008 to 2004.

We are increasing our investment in agriculture this budget by 35 per cent including emergency assistance and safety net programs. We will continue to work with farmers and farm groups to persuade the federal government to provide additional, needed dollars to support producers until international negotiations can restore a level playing field.

Mr. Speaker, we have allocated 95 million for farm income support, 6 million for the farm family opportunities initiative to help farmers adapt to the challenging . . . changing conditions in the agriculture sector, 5 million for a new Saskatchewan Conservation Cover Program, and 2 million for research and development through the Ag Development Fund.

We are providing significant increases to help health funding this year. This will ensure stable health services in our communities during this year of transition as we work to secure the future of our publicly funded, publicly administered health care system. And here too we are addressing issues of recruitment and retention of health providers by providing new funding initiatives and for providing funding for improved

wages and benefits for the work environment.

In addition to the series of personal tax reductions announced last year, Mr. Speaker, this budget provides increased tax credits for seniors, for post-secondary students, persons with disabilities, and for families with young children. We have also provided meaningful tax relief to small businesses. And we have done all these things while reducing the amount our government spends in interest on the accumulated debt.

We have a balanced budget in every sense, Mr. Speaker. We have balanced revenue and expenditures. We have balanced the program enhancement, debt reduction, and tax relief, and we have balanced the legitimate needs of every sector including education.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, this budget is providing strong provincial financial commitment and support to public education. The 33.7 million increase to the foundation operating grant this calendar year is the largest operating grant increase in Saskatchewan in 15 years. And, Mr. Speaker, compared to the 397.5 million paid out in operating grants in calendar year 1999, the 460.1 million this calendar year is an increase of almost \$63 million or 16 per cent in just two years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, all children deserve to have a complete range of high quality educational opportunities available to them. All across Saskatchewan our education system and our schools continue to strive to provide the highest quality education to our students. This government is proud to provide increased program and financial support to meet that common goal. Mr. Speaker, I certainly am proud to be supporting the budget of this government.

And just to make a little comment with regard to some of the feedback that I've received with regard to our education budget and initiatives in rural Saskatchewan, I had the pleasure of actually addressing the 6th Annual Congress of Rural Education in Saskatoon on April 1, Mr. Speaker. While I was delivering my speech — which was positively received — I noticed several members of the audience that wished to talk with me afterwards.

There was a man who came up to me and talked to me about our current budget and what we were doing in rural Saskatchewan. He liked what he heard with regard to education tax relief on ag land. He liked the fact that we dropped the percentage of value from 70 to 55 per cent on ag land, and then he said, obviously Alberta could learn a few things from Saskatchewan on this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — And you know who that man was, Mr. Speaker? It was Ray Danyluk, the Progressive Conservative member for the Alberta riding of Lac La Biche-St. Paul. The Alberta Conservatives support our budget. They like the initiatives we're doing in education and in rural Saskatchewan, and they have said so, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm proud to support our budget and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to be able to address the Legislative Assembly with regards to the budget that was brought down by the Minister of Finance just a week ago.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the details of the budget, I'd like to first look at the backdrop in which we debate this budget. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is undoubtedly a great province. Mr. Speaker, in size we are a large province. We nearly rival Alberta and British Columbia in size. Mr. Speaker, we have resources that are almost on par with the province of Alberta; perhaps even they are on par with the province of Alberta.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, we have people in this province that are known as doers — people that build, that work, that construct. Mr. Speaker, we have had a base of human resources, talent in Saskatchewan that is second to none.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has been the birthplace and the home of some of the most outstanding citizens of the world, people that have contributed far more than they have received from society, people of whom we are all very proud of as Saskatchewan citizens.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the light of this backdrop, the greatest province I believe in the nation of Canada, we see a province that right now, today, is going backward, Mr. Speaker, not because the Saskatchewan Party says it's going backward but because the facts indicate that this province is going backwards.

Population-wise, we are losing people. Mr. Speaker, this is not the doom and gloom from the official opposition. This is the picture painted by Statistics Canada who go around counting people and do it very capably, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a province that's losing jobs, immense numbers of jobs — 11,000 people fewer working than a year ago, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a province where the Minister of Education and his department — the member who just spoke — his department predicts that school enrolment over the next few years is going to drop by 30,000 students.

Mr. Speaker, what does that mean for the province of Saskatchewan? Well, Mr. Speaker, that means more jobs will be lost as schoolteachers do not have children in their classrooms to teach.

Mr. Speaker, this is reality. These are the government's numbers that I'm quoting.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a province where municipal infrastructure is falling apart. Mr. Speaker, I drive the streets of the city of Regina; I drive the highways of the province of Saskatchewan. Wherever I go I see deterioration. I see a province that should be proud, a province that should be moving forward, and I see it slipping backwards, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I see a province that used to have a proud heritage in health care, but health care is deteriorating. I've never seen such long waiting lists in all of my life. And what is more concerning is that waiting lists in Saskatchewan — I would tell the minister from Cumberland — the waiting lists in Saskatchewan are longer than in any other province in Canada. Mr. Speaker, that should not be the case. That is unacceptable. That is the result of the NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — So, Mr. Speaker, what is the NDP government's game plan? What are they going to do, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, they are shrinking the tax base of this province. Has to be, when people are leaving. Has to be, when there are fewer jobs. The tax base in our province is shrinking. So, Mr. Speaker, how are they dealing with the shrinking tax base? In this budget brought down by the Finance minister, they are increasing revenues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would think that anyone who had their thinking caps on and were seeing straight would recognize we have a problem here — a government whose revenues are dropping is planning on spending more money.

Well how are they going to do it? They're going to hire 570 more public employees. Mr. Speaker, I think that shows lack of confidence; Mr. Speaker, I think that shows lack of confidence in the 10,000 they have. If we have a shrinking province and the 10,000 public servants that we have working for us can't handle it, maybe the management should look at the job they're doing instead of trying to hire more public servants.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say for the record and for the members opposite and for others who are listening: the Saskatchewan Party has confidence in our public service. We respect our public servants.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, we know, we know, that the NDP have selected a few of their friends, put them into senior positions in the public service, and that has created a few problems.

I've called them deadwood and skunks. Now, Mr. Speaker, they have taken that out of context and tried to make it look like we believe that that is the entire civil service. That is absolutely not the case. Mr. Speaker, we respect the public service. We respect the work they do and we have more confidence in the public service than the members opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, who is the first person, who is the first person of the 570 hired? We're not talking about cutting 570 public service, let's remember that. We're talking about hiring 570 more. The very first one is a defeated NDP MP (Member of Parliament), Dennis Gruending. That's going to fill a lot of potholes, Mr. Speaker. That's going to provide a lot of support to the Social Services department, isn't it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government is hiring more public servants

because it doesn't have confidence in the public service we have now. And then it's doing more, it's backing away from its jobs promises. Even though they're hiring more public servants, the total number of jobs created in Saskatchewan — by their own admission — will be far less than they suspected. And in fact, the statistics show that they're not even going to reach their more modest projections.

Mr. Speaker, also their plan is to increase the cost to consumers in Saskatchewan by raising utility rates — SaskPower, SaskEnergy, to name a couple.

Mr. Speaker, through the action or should I say the inaction of this budget, we are going to see property taxes be raised throughout Saskatchewan.

So what's the Saskatchewan Party's proposal? What would we do if we were bringing down the budget? Now I wish we had that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I believe some day soon we will. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party would eliminate the small-business tax. They could have done it, but they're too busy building empires in the Crown Investment Corporation to eliminate the small-business tax and let small businesses generate far more jobs — far more jobs who would be taxpaying jobs — than that government could ever hope to create by expanding the public service.

Mr. Speaker, we would accelerate the reduction in personal taxes. Mr. Speaker, we would remove the Crown Investment Corporation from competing in the private sector where they have no business.

(12:00)

Mr. Speaker, we believe that we could grow Saskatchewan with a budget that shows confidence in the people of this province. Thus, Mr. Speaker, we brought forward an amendment. The amendment would lower taxes in Saskatchewan, rather than growing the government of this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier didn't understand that, the Minister of Municipal Affairs didn't understand that, the Finance minister didn't understand that.

What the Minister of Municipal Affairs is going to do is by not increasing the revenue-sharing grants to the municipalities, we will likely lose more public servants in this province than we will hire because municipalities, including the city of Regina, will be forced to lay off hardworking servants of the people of Saskatchewan.

And I'll bet you, Mr. Speaker, that there will be more than 570 public service positions lost because of the . . . (inaudible) . . . Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a few minutes and I want to touch on the fact of how disappointed we are on the Saskatchewan Party official opposition side with the response and the arguments made by some of the members across the way.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister was totally over the top when he kept repeating in a cataphasic way his statement that's progress. Mr. Speaker, that is not progress when Saskatchewan

is going backwards. Why would that minister make such a ridiculous statement in the House? Why would he discredit himself by saying that Saskatchewan was making progress under his budget, when in fact it's driving this province backwards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed by the Deputy Premier's actions. The Deputy Premier, when he realized he was losing the debate over the budget, when he realized that municipalities recognized that the Saskatchewan Party had the right idea and that his government had the wrong idea, desperately went around phoning all the municipalities he could in the province, twisting the arm of municipal politicians. And what was the result, Mr. Speaker? Well we found out in the House this morning what the result was of the panic that we saw from the Deputy Premier. He got three — three — municipalities to somewhat qualify their positions.

Mr. Speaker, they would say, they would say, Mr. Speaker, that the municipalities didn't understand the proposal that we were making. Mr. Speaker, not only did the municipalities understand what we said, but they reinforced what they said. And after the Minister of Municipal Affairs sent his silly letter around to all the municipalities, they came onside with the official opposition more than they had before.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to you and to all the members opposite and to everyone who is listening, particularly — particularly, Mr. Speaker — the public servants in Saskatchewan, that there are three members in this Assembly whose position it is to cut the public service. There are three members.

One member is the Minister of Municipal Affairs. His position was to cut 300 positions in the public service. And you know who another member was? The Minister of Education who just stood in the House. The Minister of Education ran a campaign throughout all of Saskatchewan to cut 300 members from the public service. He is the member that did it.

And, Mr. Speaker, the third member, the third member who is pleading amnesia is the member who crossed the floor, broke with the coalition, the member from North Battleford who was also a part of the team that called for a 300 person reduction in the public service. Those are the three members in this House who wanted to cut the public service.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is off to a bad start. Mr. Speaker, the Premier talked about — I don't know — buying a bus, renting a bus, preparing a bus. He talked about reconnecting with the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we can tell by the response of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we can see through the change of position by the Minister of Education, we can see through the over-the-top presentation, the cataphasic presentation by the Minister of Finance, and we can see by the chirping from the backbenchers who sing the tune that they're told to sing, that this government has not yet recognized that it's making huge, huge mistakes. This government has not yet recognized that this budget is part of the reason why our great province of Saskatchewan is going

backwards rather than forward.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member for Canora-Pelly. It's a constructive amendment. Mr. Speaker, it's an amendment that would actually grow the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, rather than creating 570 more jobs in the public service because they have no confidence in the public servants we already have, Mr. Speaker, it will see a reduction of at least 570 public servants from municipalities. Mr. Speaker, either they're going to have to raise property taxes or else they're going to have to lay off people who serve. The city of Regina, the city of Saskatoon, the Deputy Premier's city of Yorkton, the Premier's city of Moose Jaw will all be making these very, very difficult decisions.

Mr. Speaker, if Saskatchewan is going to grow — and we will say this, and we will say this, and if they won't listen, we'll say it until we replace them — if this government will not lower taxes in this province, Saskatchewan will not grow.

Mr. Speaker, they did not lower taxes in the last budget. They've raised, they expanded the PST (provincial sales tax). They expanded and they increased fees. Mr. Speaker, in this budget we are not seeing a reduction in taxes. We're going to see an increase in property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, they have been selling the people of Saskatchewan a false bill of goods but the people of Saskatchewan are not buying their false bill of goods.

Mr. Speaker, they cannot continually get up in this House and blame others for their failures. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are looking for a government that's prepared to shoulder responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, they were looking towards a new Premier who was going to stand up and say we made some mistakes in the past. We made some mistakes with regards to health care. We've made some mistakes with regards to education. We've made some mistakes with regards to the way we've treated municipalities in this province. We've made some mistakes with regards to agriculture. We recognize that Saskatchewan can do better and we're going to change direction.

That's what the people of Saskatchewan were looking for from this new Premier and his new government. But, Mr. Speaker, all they've heard is the same old line. It was the people that ran the province back in the '80s that created every problem that we currently experience right now.

Mr. Speaker, that is irresponsible. We all know about mistakes that that government made. We know about mistakes the Blakeney government made. We know of mistakes, Mr. Speaker, that Tommy Douglas and his government made.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I think I was distinctly hearing some voices other than that from the members in the Assembly. I respectfully ask anybody in the Assembly to respect the traditions of the Assembly and that is not to participate in the debate in any way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, this government is not prepared to shoulder the responsibilities for the government they have provided in the 1990s. We can't change the past. I can't undo what Tommy Douglas did, whether it be good or bad. Mr. Speaker, I remember the mistakes that Allan Blakeney made. I remember them very well.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Devine government made mistakes. We can't change that. We can't go back to the '80s. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan in 1999 showed that they know that this government has made a lot of mistakes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I call on the Premier of Saskatchewan and I call on his cabinet and I call on his backbenchers to recognize that apologizing for the mistakes of previous governments does not cut it with the people of Saskatchewan. It's time to shoulder some responsibility. It's time to come up to the plate. It's time to get out there and perform.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment brought forward by my colleague from Canora-Pelly because it will make Saskatchewan a better province if it's adopted.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — I cannot support the budget. I cannot support the budget without the amendment because it's a recipe for disaster. It means more people will leave Saskatchewan. It means that that surplus that the Minister of Finance garnered through a windfall through oil and gas revenues will be squandered with no benefit to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I call — I know it's the 11th hour — but I call on members to come to their senses, start to shoulder some responsibility. Let's turn this province around.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have this opportunity to enter into this budget debate as it draws to a close. You have heard, Mr. Speaker, and members of this legislature have heard, ministers and members on this side of the House describe in detail the very positive aspects of this budget delivered by the Minister of Finance in his speech.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you now I will be supporting this budget. I will be supporting a budget that builds on the fiscal foundation laid through the 1990s; a budget that now connects us to a very optimistic, prosperous future for this province and its people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — It is, Mr. Speaker, in my view, a budget that captures the mood which is abroad in Saskatchewan — a

mood of optimism, a mood of looking to the future, a mood of hopefulness — unlike the mood portrayed by the member opposite and the members opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I tell you this as well. I will not be supporting the amendment of the Saskatchewan Party in this legislature. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to tell you why I will not be supporting the members' opposite resolution or amendment to the budget, Mr. Speaker.

I tell you why I'm not supporting it, Mr. Speaker, because to support that amendment of theirs would mean 88 fewer forest firefighting . . . fire people in our province. That's what it will mean. It'll mean 71 people fewer to work in corrections and prisoner transport. It will mean 86 fewer people to increase highway construction and repair in our province. It will mean 60 fewer people to respond to the Child Advocate's report in dealing with children and families at risk in our province. That's what it would mean. That's what it would mean, Mr. Speaker.

And I've listened, I've listened carefully to the debate across the province, I've listened to the debate across the province, and I find no one but this group of men and women who are not supporting this budget and who will support their amendment. In fact, it's just the opposite, Mr. Speaker.

I read from the financial editor, the financial editor of *The Leader-Post*, Mr. Bruce Johnstone, a sentence which says, and I quote:

Premier Calvert should be commended, not condemned, for investing in the province's human capital as well as its infrastructure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is a government willing to invest in the province's infrastructure and in its human capital for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan and this province's great future.

Mr. Speaker, the editorial boards of our province do not share the view of the opposition members. I read, I read in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, and I am going to quote at length from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* editorial of April 5th, an editorial that is entitled the opposition's rash promises are a trap for the future.

That's what the editor says. And I will read, Mr. Speaker, from this editorial. The journalists are saying this:

Sooner than later, the Saskatchewan Party has to figure out that its one-trick-pony act — tax cuts as a solution to everything that ails the province — is going to wear thin.

Now, listen to this, Mr. Speaker, this is directly to their amendment. The editor says:

Having nattered on at length about Saskatchewan's crumbling roads, the opposition now gripes about the government hiring more Highways workers to accomplish the job. Having demanded more attention be paid to rural

Saskatchewan, it balks at hiring people to staff an agency devoted to rural revitalization.

The editor goes on to say:

The same dyspeptic reaction from the Opposition greets expansion of justice and social service programs to address issues such as FAS and family problems, provide early-childhood programs and take other measures that . . . (provide) long-term dividends in lower costs related to social ills.

(12:15)

Now listen to this, Mr. Speaker:

Apparently, the Saskatchewan Party has deluded itself that a lofty wave of its magic tax-cut wand is going to make all (the) problems disappear, leaving social harmony, economic growth and other good things in its wake.

For the Saskatchewan Party to denigrate the public service on which it will have to rely . . . to accomplish its goals in office is just plain foolish. (And) So (continues the editor) is the Opposition's oft-repeated pledge to provide tax cuts deeper than those set out by the NDP, even as it promises to do more to improve the lot of farmers in rural areas, hike municipal grants, pave more highways, improve health care, create more jobs and grow the province.

And then he serves a warning, he serves a warning to the Leader of the Opposition. The editor says:

Notions that seem so attractive when uttered from the safety of Opposition benches have a nasty habit of taking huge bites off your political rump . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now it is fair to say, Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that a number of municipal leaders in our province have indicated by correspondence to that party and this House, their support for that amendment. It is fair to say those letters have come in.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to know and I want the people of Saskatchewan to know the content of this party's communication with municipal leaders across the province. Now you'll know that their resolution in this House says, and I quote from the resolution. The resolution:

urges the provincial government to cancel its plans to expand the civil service by 570.5 positions and instead use the money saved to provide \$30 million to municipal governments . . .

That's what the resolution says.

Now they send a letter out to municipal leaders and what does the letter say in bold print, Mr. Speaker, in bold print, they say to the mayors and councils:

With this in mind, the Saskatchewan Party has proposed an

amendment to the 2001 provincial budget calling on the provincial government to provide an additional \$30 million in municipal revenue-sharing grants this year.

Period. Full stop. No mention, Mr. Speaker, no mention of cutting the 570 public servants who are going to be at work in communities, who are going to be repairing highways, who are going to be working with children and family at risk. No mention about that. They just say . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. The Assembly will come to order. The Assembly will come to order. The Assembly will come to order. The Assembly will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is pretty obvious from where we sit they don't enjoy hearing the truth of their letters being exposed in this House, Mr. Speaker. They made no mention, no mention, of cutting those men and women who will be providing services to the people of Saskatchewan — no mention about that.

They just say to the mayors and councils, well do you want the provincial government to expand revenue sharing by \$30 million? Who wouldn't say yes, Mr. Speaker? Now that's the kind of chicanery that these folks are willing to play with duly elected, duly elected people across our province.

I'm not going to support that kind of amendment and for one other reason, Mr. Speaker. I'm not supporting an amendment from a political party, a loyal opposition and its leader, who says their plan, their plan for the future economy of Saskatchewan is based on weather permitting, weather permitting.

Right here in *The Leader-Post* today it says if the Saskatchewan Party wins the next election:

Hermanson said that the population outflow would be stemmed within a year or two and the province would then grow if the weather and the national economy co-operated.

Well in my experience in this House and elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, my experience in the study of economics tells me that you don't base an economic plan, you don't base a budget on the concept of weather permitting. Weather permitting we may grow some jobs; if not, we won't. Weather permitting we may balance the budget; weather permitting we may not.

Mr. Speaker, what I am supporting is a budget, is a budget that's all-weather, Mr. Speaker — all-weather.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now a few moments ago we heard the Leader of the Opposition, a few moments ago we heard the Leader of the Opposition criticize and condemn this budget. Well I don't know whose company he's in, but he's certainly not in the company of the leading economists of Canada.

Now I have here in front of me the comments made by Ms. Mary Webb, the senior economist of the Scotiabank. What does the senior economist of the Scotiabank have to say:

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

(Scotiabank’s) . . . senior economist Mary Webb . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well from their benches, the member from Cannington is now calling the Scotiabank a nasty capitalist. That’s interesting. I find that interesting.

Well I’m just going to read what the economist of the Scotiabank has to say. I’ll carry on:

“With slowing world growth, we will see lower energy prices this year,” said Webb in a Monday interview.

Quote:

Premier Lorne Calvert’s government instead maintained a large portion of the provincial fiscal stabilization fund instead of using it to fund deeper tax cuts, a move (that) Webb agrees with.

Now here from the Toronto Dominion Bank, Mr. Speaker:

Derek Burleton, a senior economist with (the) TD Bank who handles provincial (government) analysis, used the same word — prudent — to describe the budget.

He says, quote:

“Definitely a good grade on this one.”

Definitely a good grade on this one.

Mr. Speaker, we have the validation of the Royal Bank of Canada who indicates that the Saskatchewan economy is going to grow by 3 per cent this year. We have the validation of individuals and groups across the province, they’re highlighted in the headlines. “The net plan unveiled in the budget.” “High-risk kids helped in the budget.” “Economic growth cuts debt to GDP in this budget.” “Community schools getting a funding hike in this budget.” “New spending on the province’s roads are welcomed in this budget.”

Health spending, health spending, listen to this, Mr. Speaker: “Health spending will total over 2.2 billion in this budget”. Note this, Mr. Speaker: “Farm aid beefed up in this budget”. In this budget, Mr. Speaker, headline: “Rural areas not forgotten”. In this budget headline: “Budget applauded by business” — applauded. In this budget headline: “New youth ministry gives young people much-needed voice in this budget.” “Provincial initiative good first step, FSIN says,” in this budget. “Government spends \$10 million of early childhood plan in this budget” — \$10 million, Mr. Speaker.

It’s that kind of validation that is coming, Mr. Speaker, from across the province.

But a validation that I think means as much to me as any Scotiabank economist, is the validation that comes in this

month’s edition of *Senior Living*, the voice of the senior citizen in Saskatchewan.

The seniors are saying this budget is a reflection, and I underline these words:

This budget is a reflection on the NDP’s long-term plan for Saskatchewan. Spend money on important and immediate concerns. Assuming no borrowing is required, keep a rainy day fund for emergencies.

And then they too, they too have some advice for the members opposite. The seniors of the province say this in their editorial:

If the Saskatchewan Party has any hopes (any hopes) of forming the next government, it would be prudent of them to consider the fiscal responsibility that Saskatchewan residents expect of their government. Because if they don’t, they will never form government.

That’s what it says.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to take just this very brief opportunity which is left to me to talk about the progress that is in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Eight consecutive balanced budget. That’s progress.

Eleven per cent more funding for health in this province. That’s progress.

Massive increase in agricultural spending, 35 per cent. That, my friends, is progress.

Eighty-eight new forest firefighters; 71 new people to work in corrections; 86 new people to work in the provincial highways system repairing and upgrading our highways; 60 new people to work with children and at-risk families; and the list goes on and on. That, Mr. Speaker, is progress.

Ten, ten, Mr. Speaker, gigawatt hours of wind power per year provided by this budget. Mr. Speaker, that, I tell you, is progress.

Thirteen departments, thirteen departments, Mr. Speaker, of our government working together to ensure that the Aboriginal people of our province have a place in the sun. Ten million extra in this budget for the Metis and off-reserve strategy. That is progress, Mr. Speaker.

2,200 summer jobs, personal income tax cuts of \$317 million in this year, small-business corporate tax rate cut by 25 per cent and the ceiling lifted, Mr. Speaker. That is progress.

\$950 million committed over the next three years to upgrade the roads of Saskatchewan. We’re fixing the roads, Mr. Speaker, and that is progress, I tell you.

No — underline these words — no new taxes, no fee increases in this budget. That’s progress.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, if you want to hear about some progress, let me just remind you of this, that the Minister of Finance reminded us of the day of the budget. In the year, fiscal year 1993-1994, the people of Saskatchewan, through their tax dollars were paying more on interest on the public debt than we paid on education. In this budget year, we are spending twice as much on education as we are spending on interest payments in the public debt. And that is progress.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we heard a few moments ago, the Minister of Education stand in his place and talk about what this budget is doing for education. And in my view the single most important step forward to connecting to the future for this great province, the single most important component in this budget is the investment we are making in education for our young people. That, in my view, is progress.

And within that, Mr. Speaker, if I may say so, and representing the constituency of Riversdale, I am extremely proud and pleased to be able to say this, as a result of this investment in education, we are going to double, double the number of community schools in our province — 42 new community schools in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And that, Mr. Speaker, is progress — progress.

Mr. Speaker, a budget seeks to do one thing. It seeks to put in place the values and the visions of the government of the day. It seeks to capture the value and the vision of the people of Saskatchewan.

This budget, which I am proud to stand and support, captures both the vision and the values of this government and the vision and the values of the people of Saskatchewan. And that is progress, Mr. Speaker, and I will be supporting a progressive budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. It being 30 minutes before the ordinary time of adjournment, it is my duty pursuant to rule 15(3) to interrupt proceedings on the budget debate in order to allow the mover of the budget motion to close debate.

The Minister of Finance now has up to 20 minutes to close debate after which every question necessary to dispose of the budget motion will be put to the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and while it's now been a week since the presentation of the provincial budget and I'd like to thank all members for their participation in this debate. I'd like to thank the Premier and all my colleagues in the coalition government for their support throughout the budget process. I'd like to thank my colleagues on the Treasury

Board and I'd like to thank the hard-working public servants, the men and women at Saskatchewan's Department of Finance, which I'm very proud to say, Mr. Speaker, is truly the best Finance department in all of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people across the province who watch these proceedings and who have been at home but have been sending us their words of encouragement over the last week.

I've noticed in this debate that the members opposite have had less to say than usual — and the media's noted that too, Mr. Speaker — and in fact some of them have been very anxious to get their remarks over with as quickly as possible. Now I wonder why that would be, Mr. Speaker. Well I have an idea. They know that the response to this budget, Mr. Speaker, has been overwhelmingly positive in all corners of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — They've been grasping at any straw they can to find some flimsy excuse to oppose it. But I think it's best summed up by the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, which says this. They say:

It's only to be expected that opposition politicians would take potshots at every government move, claiming that things would be better were they in charge. However, even by this lax standard, the Saskatchewan Party's reaction to the coalition government's budget appears ill-considered at best and disingenuous at worst.

Well I think disingenuous is a polite way of putting it, Mr. Speaker.

Well that's the opposition's response to the budget — so much for them.

I'm more interested, Mr. Speaker, in the people's reaction to the budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, since the budget was delivered, I and my colleagues have been all over the province. I've been in Saskatoon and Regina, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert, Southey and Sedley, and tomorrow I'll be out in rural Saskatchewan again, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues have been in Swift Current, Lloydminster, Rosetown, Nipawin, Tisdale, and Melfort. They've been in La Ronge, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Indian Head, Estevan, Kelvington, Melville, Yorkton, Weyburn. I could go on, Mr. Speaker, we've been all over this province.

And I can report to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House, that this budget has been very well received.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Saskatchewan people are pleased, Mr. Speaker, that their priorities are receiving attention. They're pleased that this government has presented them with a framework of measures to move this province forward. Because, Mr. Speaker, this coalition government is on the move and that opposition is on the run, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition who was just up a little while ago saying that this budget was a recipe for disaster, only the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, would call nine credit rating upgrades in the last five years a disaster. Only he could do that, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say to the people of the province that we have a plan. We have a plan, Mr. Speaker. And it is not a plan like the plan of the Leader of the Opposition, or so-called plan, that says, well, it depends upon the weather he says, Mr. Speaker. Well that's not good enough for the people, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition, that even Stockwell Day inspired voodoo economics will not affect the weather, Mr. Speaker. Even the Leader of the Opposition with his voodoo snake oil is not going to improve the weather, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say that one of the most popular parts of this budget, Mr. Speaker, is our plan to fix the roads.

What are people saying about that plan? Well the president of the Rural Municipalities Association says, the increased funding for highways is great. He says, it's good for rural residents. Brent Warner, the president of the Road Builders says, we're pretty encouraged it will translate into significant employment. The mayor of Val Marie, Mr. Speaker, says he's ecstatic about our plan.

The people are enthused about our plans for education. Gary Shaddock, the president of the School Trustees says, we see this year's budget as an investment in our children, the future of our province. The monies that the province has designated will go directly to the classroom and will be a huge benefit for our students. And they gave the budget an A, the Minister of Education reminds me, Mr. Speaker.

The president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation said, we're excited. Given the fact that the community school mandate has been expanded, in fact doubled, there are a number of initiatives that will provide more equity for our students, he says, no matter where they live in the province, whether urban or rural, Mr. Speaker.

Jerry Zimmer, the education director for the Saskatoon Catholic school system, said, it's nice to see we're in better times. And we are, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the doom and gloom we hear we hear from over there.

Taxes, Mr. Speaker. What has been the reaction to our tax measures? Kent Smith-Windsor, Saskatoon and District Chamber of Commerce, says, the 2 per cent reduction in the small-business income tax rate, the balanced budget, combined with the reduction in personal income taxes, is a sign of good things to come. And it is, Mr. Speaker.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that the corporate tax cut is a good first step and that we're going in the right direction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jim Carr, business person in Moose Jaw, says, this is extremely good news. He says, you're talking about a 25 per cent reduction in the tax rate; that is fairly substantial. And it is, Mr. Speaker.

Corey Adams, president of the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce, said, it's definitely good for business. And, he says, it will increase the income threshold, and that's going to be good, he says.

CJVR radio in Melfort says, Saskatchewan's budget is sure to put a smile on the faces of the province's business community. I think it has, Mr. Speaker. But I must admit, it has not succeeded in putting a smile on the faces of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. But even Harry Houdini and voodoo economics could not do that, Mr. Speaker.

The chartered accountants say it's significant to the businesses; it will make them more competitive and help to stimulate Saskatchewan's economy.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan approve of this budget, and so do the national commentators. The Premier just went through some of them — the banks, the investment bankers, the credit rating agencies. They say we're doing a good job.

What is it that the Leader of the Opposition knows, Mr. Speaker, that the credit rating agencies don't know? Not very much. Not very much, Mr. Speaker.

We're making progress. And people locally know it, Mr. Speaker, and people nationally know it.

I want to focus for a moment on personal tax reductions, because there's been a lot of talk from the opposition that we have to reduce taxes, Mr. Speaker. The editorial from the *Regina Leader-Post* the day after the budget said this:

In last year's budget, Cline cut personal income tax by introducing a three-tiered rate to be fully implemented by 2003. It surpassed the Saskatchewan Party's own recommended tax cut.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And we're talking, Mr. Speaker, about a tax cut for ordinary people, not a tax cut for the rich that is advocated by the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker.

Murray Mandryk, columnist for *The Leader-Post* says:

In fact, it's quite evident how effective this budget really is by the way the Saskatchewan Party abandoned virtually everything that it has been bellyaching about of late to refocus its criticism on the fact there are no new personal income tax reductions. Conveniently the Saskatchewan Party ignored the fact that personal income taxes for an average \$50,000 a year, two-income family will decrease by \$481 as a result of the income tax measures announced in last year's budget.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's a reason why the

Saskatchewan Party is opposed to our plan because we are cutting taxes for average people, Mr. Speaker. They advocate tax cuts for the rich, Mr. Speaker, and we're not going there.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, at length with positive reaction to this budget, but in the interests of time I will encapsulate it for the members opposite. Business likes the budget, the financial community likes it, labour likes it, teachers and school trustees like it, road builders like it, rural and urban people like it; and today, Mr. Speaker, is decision day. What will the opposition do? Do they continue to stay trapped in their doom and gloom mentality or are they going to support progress, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that the member for North Battleford has his seat belt safely secured before I make my next point. Mr. Speaker, as a result of this budget, we are fixing the roads.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The people of Saskatchewan support that. Will the opposition vote against fixing the roads?

We're investing in education. The people of Saskatchewan support that. Will the opposition vote against the investment in education? Will they vote against more money for our schools? Mr. Speaker, we're taking the Information Highway to rural Saskatchewan. I've been out in rural Saskatchewan and I can tell you that people support it, Mr. Speaker. Will the opposition vote against CommunityNet and the virtual campus?

We're cutting taxes for families, seniors, students, the disabled, and caregivers. People support that. Will the opposition vote against that? We'll see. Last year, they voted against the largest cut in personal income tax in the province's history, Mr. Speaker.

We're lowering taxes for small business. People support that. Will they vote against it, Mr. Speaker, or will they support a more competitive small-business tax regime?

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province want to know: will the members opposite vote against support for children at risk; investment in health care; training for our young people; incentives for the mining and oil and gas industries; farm income support; increased access to group homes for the disabled; summer employment for students; more police officers; reforestation; wind power and safer drinking water; enhanced student aid; Aboriginal employment development, and hundreds of other positive budget measures?

The members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have a choice. So far this session we on this side of the House are building for the future. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We propose; they oppose.

The opposition has been complaining. First, they complain — get this, Mr. Speaker — they complain we're hoarding \$500 million in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Then they complain because we're spending the money. First, they say we're sitting on the money; then they say we're spending too much money. Will which way is it, Mr. Speaker? We can't save and spend at the same time.

But I want to say this: that the members opposite get up and they say that we're operating in a deficit because we're spending some of our savings. Well imagine that, Mr. Speaker.

It's like if George and Sonya are at home and they've got \$10,000 in the bank. And Sonya says, George, let's take \$3,000 of our \$10,000 and spend it. We've got some savings. Let's pave the driveway and let's build a deck behind our house. George says, Sonya, I think that's a pretty good idea. We've got \$10,000; we'll spend \$3,000. They've still got \$7,000.

You know what the opposition calls that, Mr. Speaker? They call that a deficit. They call it a deficit. Well, I've got news for the members of the opposition. The difference between what we're doing by spending some of our savings and what they would do by borrowing money and spending it is that we're drawing down our savings. We're not operating on borrowed money that will be paid for by the next generation as they would, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I want to tell the members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that when George and Sonya watch the Leader of the Opposition and the members opposite patter on about their voodoo economics inspired by Stockwell Day, they just look at them and shake their heads, Mr. Speaker — just shake their heads. And we're all shaking our heads when we listen to this, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we need to protect our children, fix the roads, and fight forest fires. We need to do those things.

We say protect the children, as the Children's Advocate says, by hiring social workers. We say, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be hiring social workers. They say we should be firing social workers, Mr. Speaker.

Then they complain about the roads. They say that we should fix the roads. Then they complain, Mr. Speaker, because we want to hire some people to fix the roads. We say let's hire the people to fix the roads. They say let's fire the people that fix the roads, Mr. Speaker. They want to fire the highways workers, Mr. Speaker. We want to fix the roads and that's what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker.

They complain about lack of services to rural Saskatchewan. We want to hire some people, Mr. Speaker, to take the information highway to people in 366 communities across the province. We want every child, whether they live in Southey or Sedley or Humboldt or Saskatoon to have the same access to computers in the information highway, or whether they're in La Loche, Mr. Speaker, or Weyburn or Ile-a-la-Crosse. That's what we want to do.

They complain we don't do enough for rural Saskatchewan. We want to hire the people to do it. They want to fire the people who will do it, Mr. Speaker.

They complain that we don't do enough for education. We want to hire people, Mr. Speaker, that will develop the information highway in education, a curriculum to take to all parts of the

province that will provide services to special education students, Mr. Speaker. We want to double the funding and the employees for special education students — double it over what it was four years ago, Mr. Speaker. We want to hire people to do that. They want to fire people who would do that, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, so much for the opposition. And that's why George and Sonya, sitting there watching this budget debate, are wondering what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about and they're just scratching their heads trying to make sense out of what this opposition is saying, Mr. Speaker.

They complain about everything, Mr. Speaker. They say they want to fix the roads. We have a plan to fix the roads. What are they doing? They're opposing it.

They say they want more money for education. We're putting the money into education. What are they doing, Mr. Speaker? They're opposing it. They say they want us to help the children at risk. We're helping the children at risk. What do they do, Mr. Speaker? They're opposing it. They say they want more competitive taxes. We're bringing in more competitive taxes. What are they doing, Mr. Speaker? They're opposing it.

Will they ever stop complaining? No, Mr. Speaker, they'll never stop complaining. But what we will do, notwithstanding their complaints, Mr. Speaker; we will keep building. That is what the people of Saskatchewan expect of us.

Our province is the best place in Canada to live, to work, and to raise a family. And our commitment, Mr. Speaker, is to make it even better.

We will build, Mr. Speaker. We propose, Mr. Speaker: they oppose. We construct: they destruct. And I predict they're going to self-destruct, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've laid out our plan in education, in transportation, and in technology. And notwithstanding the complaints of the opposition, we will implement our plan, Mr. Speaker — a plan of good news for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 12:50 until 12:51.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 26

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantefoer	Toth
Stewart	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	McMorris	D'Autremont
Bjornerud	Weekes	Kwiatkowski
Brkich	Harpauer	Wakefield
Wiberg	Hart	Allchurch
Peters	Huyghebaert	

Nays — 31

Calvert	Kasperski	Hagel
Lautermilch	Atkinson	Serby
Melenchuk	Cline	Sonntag
Goulet	Van Mulligen	MacKinnon
Wartman	Thomson	Prebble
Belanger	Crofford	Axworthy
Nilson	Hamilton	Junor
Addley	Jones	Higgins
Harper	Trew	Osika
Lorjé	Yates	McCall
Hillson		

The division bells rang from 12:54 until 12:55.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 30

Calvert	Kasperski	Hagel
Lautermilch	Atkinson	Serby
Melenchuk	Cline	Sonntag
Goulet	Van Mulligen	MacKinnon
Wartman	Thomson	Prebble
Belanger	Crofford	Axworthy
Nilson	Hamilton	Junor
Addley	Jones	Higgins
Harper	Trew	Osika
Lorjé	Yates	McCall

Nays — 27

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantefoer	Toth
Stewart	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	McMorris	D'Autremont
Bjornerud	Weekes	Kwiatkowski
Brkich	Harpauer	Wakefield
Wiberg	Hart	Allchurch
Peters	Huyghebaert	Hillson

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture and Food Department Vote 1

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — I would like to wish each and every member a sunny and warm weekend at home with their friends and relatives.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:59.