

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of people concerned about shortcomings in the tobacco legislation and present the following petition. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco product; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

Signatures on this petition this morning, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Tisdale, Sylvania.

And I so present. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable condition of Highway 339. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 339 in order to facilitate economic development initiatives.

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

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by individuals from the communities of Avonlea, Kayville, and Ormiston.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The signatories, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Langenburg, Esterhazy, and Churchbridge.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the province regarding the deplorable state of our highways — some of our highways in particular. Their prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 35 in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency in order to prevent injury and loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Francis, Regina, Weyburn, Estevan, Midale, and Odessa area.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of concerned citizens on the issue . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of people in the province concerned with the current tobacco legislation . . . tobacco control legislation. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of tobacco.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the city of Swift Current, from Moose Jaw, Regina, Southey, Webb, and Gull Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about certain inadequacies in the tobacco legislation. Their prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by the good citizens of Carrot River, White Fox, and Arborfield.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition regarding citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the tobacco legislation. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

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

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Spiritwood and Medstead.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been received as:

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 7, 8, 11, 16, 18, and 19.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

To the minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs: what was the total sum of provincial funding provided to the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan including Métis organizations and agencies for the year 2000-2001; and further to this, could the minister please provide a detailed breakdown of this funding?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce through you and to all the members of the legislature, a good friend of mine seated in the west gallery, Gunnar Passmore, who lives with his wife, Dee, and children in Sedley but who I've known for a good number of years who I want to publicly say I thoroughly enjoyed our working relationship too over the past months and years. And I ask all hon. member to welcome my good friend, Gunnar Passmore.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you and to you to all members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce Jim Gudmundson from Emerald Park who is seated in your gallery. Jim is the husband of Terry Gudmundson, one of our caucus researchers, and I ask all members to please join me in welcoming Jim. And I hope you enjoy the proceeding today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very, very much for recognizing me. Through you and to you to the rest of the gallery . . . or to the rest of the Assembly, I too would like to welcome Gunnar Passmore from Sedley, Saskatchewan, a constituent of mine. It's always interesting come election time

how his house — he's got a beautiful two-story house in Sedley, a nice green coloured house which turns orange come election time, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to welcome him here . . .

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — . . . and hope he enjoys the proceedings.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Youth Works to Help Regina Children and Teens

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, Regina's mayor, Pat Fiacco, and a young gentleman by the name of Ryan Fraser deserve a huge pat on the back for their innovative and positive action to help Regina's youth, especially youth at risk, concentrate their talents and energy on wholesome and character-enhancing activities.

About a year ago, Ryan Fraser had a great desire to assist youth in Regina's inner city and approached Mayor Fiacco with the idea of forming a Midnight Basketball League. The idea was based on the principle that if youth have opportunities to expend their energies in a meaningful and productive way in the evenings, they would be less likely to end up in trouble. Ryan and Mayor Fiacco worked together on this project and solicited the help of the entire community to turn Ryan's dream into a reality and the inner city basketball league was born.

Every Friday and Saturday evening between the hours of 8 p.m. and 2 a.m., youth who might otherwise have little in the way of resources to get involved in sports, now have the opportunity to play basketball at Scott Collegiate.

Churches, schools, business, and corporate community are major players in this initiative by providing much-needed financial, moral, and practical support. As well, part of the proceeds from the mayor's annual dinner go towards financially supporting this very special league.

Mr. Speaker, this program received no government funding whatsoever — it's just people helping people. So I'd like to congratulate Mayor Pat Fiacco, Ryan Fraser, community leaders in Regina, and all the volunteers for taking real and positive action on behalf of youth at risk.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

University of Saskatchewan to Conduct Co-operatives Study

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the University of Saskatchewan has been chosen to lead our country's largest study ever on co-operatives — \$2.2 million has been invested for a three-year study that will encompass nine universities, a number of community groups, and a project team stretching from coast to coast.

Titled "Co-operative Membership and Globalization: Creating Social Cohesion through Market Relations", the study will investigate the extent to which co-operatives reflect and contribute to our common sense of identity in the communities

where they are located.

Dr. Brett Fairbairn, the director of the centre for the study of co-operatives, says that globalization and big companies have changed the social fabric of cities and towns across our country. He says his team will now examine the impact that co-ops and their members have had in our society. Quote "Creating a new co-operative is one of the best responses communities can make to globalization," says Fairbairn. Understanding co-operative membership and social cohesion is especially important today when Canadian communities face both threats and opportunities through globalization.

Mr. Speaker, the strength, the resolve, and the faith in the common good are rooted in our province's history. I am sure that all members share my enthusiasm and hope that the completion of this study will expose the rest of our country to one of the building blocks of a compassionate society that we have had for so long.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Winter Games Volunteers Honoured

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in February we all had the opportunity to cheer for our Canadian athletes in the Olympics in Salt Lake City. And we also had the opportunity to cheer for our Saskatchewan athletes at the Winter Games in Humboldt.

An event of this proportion requires many volunteers. Recently *The Wadena News* received a letter from the games services chairperson, Dan Meakin, who stated:

This event was the largest undertaking that Humboldt has ever attempted and it went off (partially) without a hitch . . . due to the eager help of Glen Lazeski and the Wadena School Division. After we told Glen that we needed 20 buses and were unable to get them locally, the Wadena School Division not only graciously offered to let us use the fleet of ten buses, providing we covered the transportation expenses, but they also encouraged us to seek the use of privately-owned school bus contractors. This led us to secure seven more buses from the Wadena Area as well as ten bus drivers. Each and every one of those bus drivers (were) . . . absolutely fantastic and exceeded all of my expectations in the completion of their duties. They were all very polite, kind, patient, professional and . . . (delightful) to work with.

Mr. Speaker, it has also been a great . . . always been a great pleasure for me to be able to say I represent Kelvington-Wadena constituency. I know that this constituency has a solid volunteer base and that people of this constituency understand the value of volunteering their time for their community and their province.

I would ask the Assembly to join with me in thanking all of these bus drivers. Without the help of these volunteers, the movement of the more than 1,600 athletes during the seven-day event would not have been possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Library System Opens New Building

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, good news from Northern Saskatchewan. The provincial government continues to build a strong partnership with the people of the North. Last weekend, which was attended by the member of Athabasca, the Pakkisimon Nuyeyáh Library System opened a new building. I am sure all members share my congratulations to Chair Brian Suetta, the board members, Audrey Mark, and other staff members on this tremendous accomplishment.

Of course, this was made possible by the provincial Centenary Fund, as we're going to . . . moving forward to celebrate you know our 100 years.

This will provide free access to the Internet through the library, public libraries, access to all lending collections in the province through the Province-wide Library Electronic Information System Web page. The interlibrary system among regions uses this interLEND system. Ten years ago nobody heard about Internet and now it's going to be available in the North.

I would also like to say that the . . . to say a special congratulations to the people of La Ronge and their honouring of former mayor, Mel Hegland. They renamed the Communiplex in his name. Tremendous hockey, including the Ice Wolves, is played over there, the youth in regards to the many activities on ice, curling, etc. Congratulations to Mel Hegland on his leadership for the many years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:15)

Bruce and Barb Penton

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I would like to pay tribute to a couple who have given a lot to their community. Mr. Speaker, I speak of Bruce and Barb Penton, owners of the Moosomin *World Spectator*. Today, in fact, is their last day with the *World Spectator*.

Mr. Speaker, Bruce and Barb moved to Moosomin in 1982 when Bruce became the editor of the *Spectator* and, at that time, the *Spectator* was owned and operated by Mr. John Meen. In 1991, Bruce and Barb purchased the paper from Mr. Meen and continued running the paper until just recently when they sold the *Spectator* to Mr. Kevin Weedmark.

Over the years, the Pentons have been very active in the community of Moosomin, Bruce being an active secretary for the Moosomin Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Speaker, as well the Pentons were avid golfers.

And, Mr. Speaker, the politicians of this province will know and remember the *World Spectator* and Mr. Penton for the many reminders that he brought to our attention, when he brought to our attention the need to move to daylight savings time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish the Pentons well as they move to Brandon and begin a new chapter in their lives in the involvement in a new paper. And I'm certain as well that they

will continue to enjoy their love of golf as they will now have the extra hour in the day to enjoy that round of golf.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to wish Mr. Weedmark and his staff well as they continue the rich heritage of the Moosomin *World Spectator*.

And while I'm on my feet, I would like to extend to the members of this Assembly a very happy and pleasant Easter weekend.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Easter Greetings

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later on today, we will leave this Assembly, go to our homes, and begin preparation for what is for millions worldwide the most significant, most contemplative, and most joyous weekend of the year. Whether it be in a religious or secular fashion, each of us in our own way will take part in the celebrations which symbolize for us the need for reflection, the urgency of peace, and the promise of renewal.

On behalf of all government members, I wish all people the fulfilment of the promise of this season.

First, of course, tonight is the celebration of the Jewish Passover, the observance which marks the beginning of the liberation of the children of Israel from bondage and the preparation for the most significant mass migration in history. For people of any religious persuasion, the desire for a homeland expressed in the Passover ceremony and the anguished but hopeful cry of next year in Jerusalem should uplift our spirits.

And for Christians, the desolation of death leading to the promise of rebirth and rejuvenation embodied in the central story reminds us that no defeat is final and that hope springs eternal.

Mr. Speaker, two days ago we had agreement expressed in this House on the sad necessity for military action in the perennially troubled part of the world which is ironically the birthplace of both of these religions. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, on this weekend of hope and renewal we might take a moment to remark on the necessity for peace in this and all the corners of the world. And as the Minister of Finance said yesterday offer thanks that we live in a province and a nation blessed with peace and with plenty.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Happy Easter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budgetary Projections

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, nobody is buying the NDP's (New Democratic Party) fudge-it budget. One column has called it a:

... sheer sleight-of-hand ... the likes of which we have not seen since the days of former finance minister ... Gary Lane ...

Mr. Speaker, that government of the '80s hid debt in capital projects. The Blakeney government used to hide debt in the Crowns. And the Glen Clark government in BC (British Columbia) hid debt by coming up with bogus revenue estimates.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is doing all three.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP cooking the books and hiding the deficit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would just want to make mention to the members that when it comes to parliamentary language, a lot depends on the context and while the phrase, cooking the books, may be acceptable in some contexts, there are other contexts where it could intimate illegal action. I would ask the member to be careful about the use of language.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Oh well, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is going to compare me to Gary Lane, all I can say is I'm glad to be compared to one of the few Tories that ended up on the right side of the bar.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the people of the province should know that what this member is saying. What he's saying, Mr. Speaker, is he disagrees with our plan to put more money into building schools and building university buildings. That's what they're opposing, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the president of the School Trustees Association, Mr. Speaker, who says the increase in capital funding definitely gives more school boards the opportunity to do some of the things that need to be done. Unlike the universities, Mr. Speaker, that say the work is badly needed and they welcome the work. Unlike the teachers, Mr. Speaker, who say this work needs to be done.

And I want to tell you how phony this argument really is, Mr. Speaker. The other day — and I have the transcript — this is what the member had to say on March 25. He was asked: they're talking about amortizing capital projects over a longer period of time — as anybody would do building a home, Mr. Speaker — and what did the member who just got up have to say to the media that day? He said, but there's nothing wrong with that — there's nothing wrong with that. When you look at amortization, if you look at becoming more transparent and proper accounting principles, school boards and municipal boards have been doing ...

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance can try all the magic accounting tricks he wants. But you know, Mr. Speaker, he's no Siegfried and the Premier's no Roy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — We'd like the minister to explain some of the bogus revenue estimates in his fudge-it budget. First of all, the minister is projecting a \$40 million increase in potash revenue this year — that's a 25 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. But at the same time, there is no increase in the forecast for the price of potash.

The Saskatchewan Party has spoken with officials at PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.) and the Saskatchewan Potash Producers Association. Both tell us they expect no increase in potash production this year.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't add up. Will the minister please tell us how he dreamed up a \$40 million revenue increase when the potash industry, and his own budget, say there will be no increase.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I see once again the opposition has rediscovered their long-lost brother, Roy. In an effort to tear down the Premier, Mr. Speaker, what do they do? They say, oh the Premier's no Roy Romanow. They say they like Roy Romanow. The problem with that argument, Mr. Speaker, is they spent 10 years trying to tear down Roy Romanow. That's what they did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. While Roy Romanow was trying to build the province as the Premier here is trying to build the province, they're trying to tear things down. We're trying to build the schools — they don't want us to build the schools, Mr. Speaker. We're trying to build the universities — they don't want us to build the universities, Mr. Speaker.

And they can hide behind all the rhetoric they want, but the reality is that member says one thing in this House and he goes outside the House and he says something else. He went outside the House the other day and when pressed on the point he said there was nothing wrong with amortizing the cost of . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here's another bogus revenue number in the NDP's fudge-it budget. NDP is projecting a \$51 million increase in sales tax revenue — that's a 6.6 per cent increase. But their own budget forecast says retail sales will only be up 1.6 per cent this year. And the liquor tax increase only amounts to \$15 million.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers don't add up. They have \$40 million in potash revenue that doesn't add up, and the \$50 million in sales tax revenue that doesn't add up either.

Will the minister explain why he is overestimating revenue just like Glen Clark did in his fudge-it budget in 1996?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well you see, Mr. Speaker, the difference between the members opposite and the members on this side of the House is we have confidence in the future of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — They will get up, Mr. Speaker, and they will oppose anything we propose in the budget. And they'll question the numbers because they are the party of doom and gloom. They are the party that says that this province has no future.

We are the party, Mr. Speaker, that says that this province has a great future. And this budget is going to ensure that great future by fixing the roads, which they oppose; by lowering the personal income taxes, which they oppose; by putting more money into health care, which they oppose; by putting money into education, which they want to freeze.

And we're going to build those schools and we're going to build at the universities notwithstanding the opposition from those doom and gloom members over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fiscal Stabilization Fund

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has some new tricks and he also has some old tricks. One of the old tricks in his fudge-it budget is making the \$225 million magically appear out of a rainy day fund that doesn't exist.

And how does he pull off this trick, Mr. Speaker? By borrowing money and running up the debt.

Mr. Speaker, that means the NDP has a deficit. The Provincial Auditor knows it. The bond rating agencies know it. Everyone in Saskatchewan knows it. Once again, it doesn't add up.

Mr. Speaker, why does the minister keep resorting to this same worn-out trick to try to hide the deficit? Why doesn't he just come clean and tell us, what's the real size of the deficit in his fudge-it budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well if anybody would be an expert on deficits, it would be the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — But I want to tell the House and I want to tell the public, Mr. Speaker, what it is that other people say about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

The Leader-Post says:

Thanks to a rainy day fund that acts like a fiscal shock absorber, the provincial government is set to ride relatively smoothly.

Bruce Johnstone said:

The concept makes good sense.

Michael Rushton of the University of Regina says:

There's nothing hidden here. This is exactly what the Fiscal Stabilization Fund should do.

David Perry of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation says:

Ideally you wouldn't have money just sitting in the bank.

Now this does contrast with their record, Mr. Speaker, because if they had their way, the money would probably be sitting in safety deposit boxes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, nobody is falling for the minister's smoke and mirrors. Nobody is falling for his worn-out old accounting tricks. Nobody believes this fudge-it budget.

Mr. Speaker, I guess Roy must have taken the good calculator when he left. And you know, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Finance minister, I am now referring to former Premier Roy Romanow instead of Siegfried and Roy which he didn't quite add up the last time.

Mr. Speaker, because this budget doesn't add up, the last resort of a desperate government is to fudge the budget and do some creative accounting. That's exactly what the NDP did yesterday.

Will the minister come clean? Will the minister be honest with the people of Saskatchewan and tell us the real size of his deficit in his fudge-it budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well here they go again citing Roy Romanow, who they did nothing but oppose when he was here, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say, this is how ridiculous the arguments of the opposition are. Last year, what was the opposition saying? Listen to this headline, Mr. Speaker. "NDP sitting on billion dollar surplus," they said. And then a little while later they said, "NDP pours 400 million oil and gas windfall into political slush fund." Then they said that "The legislature should be recalled to immediately spend a \$400 million surplus," Mr. Speaker.

We said we were going to keep that money until we needed it. That's what we did. It was the right thing to do. And if we hadn't done that, Mr. Speaker, instead of lowering taxes today, we'd be increasing them like their cousins in Alberta and their cousins in BC are doing.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to do the Gordon Campbell, Canadian Alliance trick. We're going to keep our balanced budget with our Fiscal Stabilization Fund and we're going to reduce taxes which they would never do, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Plans for Saskatchewan's Economic Growth

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

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, instead of playing fast and loose with the books and fudging the budget, the NDP could have presented a plan to grow Saskatchewan. At the very least, they could have presented a plan to achieve their own election promise of creating 30,000 new jobs. Did they do that yesterday? No. According to yesterday's budget, the NDP is now projecting a net increase of — not 30,000 jobs — 1,000 jobs by next year compared to 1999.

Mr. Speaker, private forecasters are projecting a net loss of jobs in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's fudge-it budget admitted that the NDP will not reach their job-creation target numbers.

Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP abandoned their promise to create 30,000 jobs in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — It repeats daily — it repeats daily, the doom and the gloom and the negativism from that group over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now the people of Saskatchewan can . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The people of Saskatchewan today have a choice. They can believe the Leader of the Opposition or they can believe StatsCanada. StatsCanada in its most recent work indicates the following: StatsCanada indicates Saskatchewan will lead the nation in capital investment growth this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — New capital investment is expected to exceed \$6.9 billion in 2002, up 9.3 per cent from last year.

StatsCanada indicates manufacturing is projected to grow 200 per cent. Investment in the mining sector is expected to increase 11 per cent. Retail trade expected to grow by 16.7 per cent, and wholesale trade by 7.4.

This government, these men and women, the people of Saskatchewan, StatsCanada, believe in the future of this province. Only one group does not, and they are all seated across from us in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

would say to the Premier, the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow the province by 100,000 people. What is gloom and doom about growing Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — The Saskatchewan Party has the plan to create jobs . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow jobs in this province. What's wrong with that? Why won't the Premier of the province . . .

The Speaker: — Members, order please. I want to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP doesn't want to admit that the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow Saskatchewan, a plan that people of Saskatchewan are getting excited about. Meanwhile what do they deliver in their budget? They deliver a plan to only grow the province's job workforce by 1,000 people, a plan to cut school enrolments right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, the response to this budget has been disappointment and frustration. People recognize that the NDP has no plan to grow the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Members, I ask for your co-operation to obey your own self-imposed rules. Got to be able to hear the questions; got to be able to hear the answers.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP do not like it that the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow Saskatchewan. So what do they do, Mr. Speaker? Instead of having a plan, they cook the books. They paper over a budget that doesn't add up.

Mr. Speaker, instead of cooking the books and fudging the budget, why didn't the NDP come up with a real plan, a real solid plan, to grow this province like the Saskatchewan Party does, a plan to grow Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I do have, I do have a copy of the Sask Party plan — on one page. Here it is, the whole Sask Party plan, one page. What does it say? It says, you know if we just cut the taxes, everything will be roses. That's a one-page plan.

Well is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder they took this one page and they went on a bus tour? They took the one page and they went on a bus tour. Well here's the reports of their tour across Saskatchewan.

Well one headline put it quite accurately. *The Wilkie Press*, the headline in their tour to advertise the plan: "Grow Saskatchewan or gut Saskatchewan."

Look at this, Mr. Speaker. They went out on the tour to sell this plan. Headline after headline: "Dismal turnout for presentation." "Sask Party preaches to few on tour." What's the next one, Mr. Speaker? "Grow Saskatchewan meetings stunted by indecision."

You know what, Mr. Speaker? They came to Moose Jaw; they got 12. They went to Meadow Lake; they got 4. They went to Assiniboia; they got 2. That's the support for the one-page Sask Party plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Effects of Budget on Education

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday's provincial budget was bad news for education — it was bad news for school boards, it was bad news for teachers, and it was especially bad news for the students in this province.

Last year Saskatchewan people learned that this government had planned on the loss of 30,000 students by the end of the decade. Well what happened in yesterday's budget appears the NDP is trying to make that happen a lot quicker.

The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association said they need an increase of \$25 million just to keep the status quo. Well yesterday's budget came through with just \$11 million. Mr. Speaker, that's a \$14 million shortfall.

Mr. Speaker, will the new Minister of Learning explain what programs he thinks should be cut, or how many teachers he thinks should be fired, or maybe what schools he thinks should be closed, in order to make up for this shortfall?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Might I point out that there was a significant increase to the education budget overall — 7.8 per cent. The largest increase for this combined department, it's the biggest amount of dollars we've ever provided for education in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And when we talk about the capital allocation that will be building schools, that will be building buildings on the university campuses, that will be helping our SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), that will be providing for technical . . . computer equipment, these are all positive, Mr. Speaker. And the increase in our foundation operating grant of \$14 million is a 3 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, in a time when we have seen declining revenues for this province. Well, guess what? The priorities of this government are education, are health care, are highways, and municipal revenue sharing.

And they have no priorities, Mr. Speaker. Their only priority was a 20 per cent tax cut and everything frozen, Mr. Speaker — frozen solid.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we're talking about an operating budget. School divisions are not even going to be able to

operate at last year's level with the amount of money this government put into the budget. And right now, Mr. Speaker, school divisions have indicated they're going to need an extra \$85 million to deal with the new teachers' contract that's coming up this year.

The teachers have asked for a 14 per cent increase over two years. But even if the new teachers' contract results in just a 6 per cent increase, that means that schools are going to need \$18 million more to deal with the teachers' contract. School boards are already \$14 million short to be able to break even this year. How are they supposed to be able to cope with any sort of wage increase at all?

The NDP budget cuts to education have left schools across the province with four choices. Can they cut programs? Should they cut staff? Should they close schools? Or should they just raise taxes? In lots of cases they're going to have to do all four.

Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP government choose to cut education operating grants and raise property taxes? And more importantly, why did this NDP government choose to abandon education in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely incredible that they can ask questions on education when they went to the people of Saskatchewan with their platform in 1999, with their plan, and they said they were going to freeze spending in education, Mr. Speaker. Just one example: the foundation operating grant in this province was 397 million in 1999; it's almost 480 million today, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about well over a 25 per cent increase in just those short years, Mr. Speaker.

And guess what? If we would have followed their plan and froze spending on education . . . They talk about what services would have been cut, how much they would have downloaded on property taxes. They are the party that would have hiked up property taxes in this province like this, Mr. Speaker, because when you freeze government spending, you off-load on your ratepayers. And that's what they would have done, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Drinking Water Quality

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, with the water crisis hitting communities in this province from Arran on the Manitoba border to Perdue near the Alberta border, what does this government do? It cuts the budget of Sask Water by over 12 per cent. And it takes it all out of a subvoted titled water quality.

Mr. Speaker, they've spent \$2 million on a water inquiry studying the problem and now they cut the agency of government that's charged with the responsibility of keeping our water safe in this province. Is this an example of how little this government cares about the lives and health of Saskatchewan residents?

Mr. Speaker, our province was recently called Mississippi north in the *National Post*. Does this government want us instead to

get the title of Mexico north? Is that their strategy for building tourism in this province? Is that why they cut the Sask Water budget in the midst of a water crisis in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker. And on this side of the House we're going to take a very serious approach to this very crucial challenge that all provinces face in this country and across the world, Mr. Speaker.

And furthermore, what did this government do and what did this Premier do when that problem hit, Mr. Speaker? Right now he called an inquiry to find out what went wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And that inquiry will give us a lot of good information. And whether it's North Battleford, Perdue, or Arran, this government will respond, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to be in partnership with them, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll point out the value of doing this study in North Battleford. It will set a template for us to look at other opportunities to improve water quality systems across this great province.

And I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, in the last two years we've had some significant effort into making sure we have staff and resources out there to deal with this problem.

And what did that member do, Mr. Speaker? He stood up in this Assembly and he voted against those improvements.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House a gentleman that really needs not a great deal of introduction in this building or in many areas of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like members to welcome John MacLeod of the Saskatchewan Building Trades Council. I welcome him here today and I hope he enjoys the proceedings. Nice to see you, John.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. McCall: — To you and through you to the members of this legislature, I'd like to introduce to the House, seated in the western gallery, one Matthew Lingenfelter. Matthew, if you could stand and wave, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Matthew's getting close to finishing high school but he's already a champion debater. Given his lineage, he knows more about this place than most of the folks seated here. And I warn you all — watch out. He's coming. Anyway, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please give him a warm introduction.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, with leave for the introduction of guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Matthew Lingenfelter to the legislature here today. I just had a chance last week to visit with your father at the leader's dinner in Calgary. He appears to be enjoying Alberta a great deal and said there was little chance he would ever return to Saskatchewan, unfortunately — unfortunately — like a lot of other people that have left this province without any chance of them ever coming back as well.

I would ask all members of the legislature to join with me in welcoming our good friend from Alberta.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — To introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased also to welcome Matthew Lingenfelter to the House this morning. And just by the way, Matthew, I had breakfast with your father this morning with a large group of Regina business people, in that your father is at home in Regina this week. And you know what, Matthew, your dad is doing a great thing for the province of Saskatchewan going to Alberta, bringing those dollars home to Saskatchewan, and a whole lot more, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 201 — The Members' Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2002

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 201, The Members' Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2002

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

Bill No. 15 — The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2002 /Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi de 1988 sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2002, 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.

Bill No. 16 — The Independent Officers' Remuneration (Amendment) Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, The Independent Officers' Remuneration (Amendment) Act, 2002, 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. By leave, I request permission to table responses for questions no. 16 through 22 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 have been tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave I would like to convert questions no. 23 through 32 for debates returnable.

The Speaker: — Questions no. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32 have been converted to orders for returns (debatable).

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.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to continue with my remarks that I began yesterday.

And before I do that, I'd like to recognize two people that assist me very much in ensuring that the questions and the comments that are raised in my constituency of Canora-Pelly are dealt with. And I want to thank my constituency assistant who looks after my offices in Canora and Norquay, Mr. Bob Blahay, for all his help in . . . throughout the year in making sure that all the items that are raised are taken care of. And another individual

by the name of Renee Parsons who assists me in . . . at the Foam Lake office. I too want to extend my appreciation to her.

Mr. Speaker, 24 hours has passed since the delivery of a budget — a budget that the people of Saskatchewan are looking at very, very closely today. A budget that definitely is a deficit budget where everyone in the province — bond rating agencies, the Provincial Auditor — has said this for a while.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to enter into the record a couple of comments that have been around for a while. I want to read a comment from *The Leader-Post* of February 19, 2002 — a short month and a few . . . couple weeks ago. And the article says this:

Saskatchewan is already running a deficit budget of at least 430 million this year according to Canada's largest bond rating agency.

Dominion Bond Rating Service, DBRS, assistant vice-president, Geneviève Lavallée said . . . there is no way to categorize Saskatchewan's budgetary situation this year other than a deficit.

So that's pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, that last year's budget in this province — which is somewhere in the area of \$400 million, 430 million maybe — that year-end is coming to a close this Sunday.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. Order. I would ask members to just tone it down a bit, please, so we can hear all of the remarks. Order.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in today's *StarPhoenix*, Thursday, March 28, the comment in that article is this, and I quote:

No matter how hard Cline and the Lorne Calvert government try to make the province's books and their management of them look good, however, it's impossible to ignore the disquieting feeling that they are about to take Saskatchewan people on a scary ride we've been on before — one we've spent the better part of a decade trying to forget.

Mr. Speaker, comments like that in the paper prior to this budget, now in newspapers after the budget, that state we have a deficit — we have a huge deficit.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers are so unclear, the kinds of fudge-it budget, as many people are referring to — this budget is so unclear that we can't even tell whether that deficit will be in the area of 400 million or whether it might be as high as \$700 million.

That's going to place a terrible burden on the future of children that are growing up right now in this province.

This government . . . I recall the start of the NDP government of the '90s claiming that we must not mortgage the future of our children. Very clearly they said that the kind of budgeting that was done in the '80s was not acceptable. They passed . . . in 1995 they passed a piece of legislation called the balanced

budget legislation, one that said you must account for all of your expenditures in the given year.

What happened yesterday, Mr. Speaker? Well now we're relying on Crown corporations. We're now relying on a Fiscal Stabilization Fund that is not there. It's not a fund that's on deposit, Mr. Speaker. The questions have been raised on the Minister of Finance as to whether or not this fund is on deposit in some bank, and if it's there, how much interest is it drawing. It doesn't exist. The Provincial Auditor has said it doesn't exist. It is just a bookkeeping entry that allows the government to borrow, and create a bigger debt when they want to refer to it.

Mr. Speaker, when we compare fiscal stabilization funds to the Heritage Fund of Alberta . . . and the government opposite says, well we don't like to compare ourselves to Alberta. We don't like to make reference to Alberta because, you know, things may be better over there, and we want to be positive about Saskatchewan. And you know, we do as well; we want this province to grow.

But let's take a look, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a look at the Heritage Fund that is created in the province of Saskatchewan. And I have the annual report of 2001 — the highlights of that Heritage Fund.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of comments about that Alberta Heritage Fund is this. It says the Heritage Fund has investments in bonds, real estate, domestic stocks, foreign stocks, and other financial instruments.

Another question in this report, Mr. Speaker, is how much money did the Heritage Fund have, and what did it earn last year? Well the total fair value of the fund is \$12.1 billion. That's the amount of money that's sitting in the Alberta Heritage Fund.

Members opposite have stood in this House and said, there is no fund; Alberta doesn't have a fund; they're like us — we just run on a line of credit. That is absolutely false, Mr. Speaker, because last year, in 2001, the fund earned \$706.2 million in net investment income. This money will be used to support priorities like tax cuts, program spending in health care, education, infrastructure, and debt retirement, Mr. Speaker.

What a difference. What a difference between the province of Saskatchewan and the province of Alberta. Here we have an imaginary fund, one that doesn't contain any money in it, one that the government, the NDP government says, we'll dip into this fund. But really what it means is we will go to the bank and we will increase the debt of the province of Saskatchewan.

They're doing it again this year. They relied on over \$400 million of that kind of debt financing last year and this year they will be dipping into that fund by as much as 225 million, Mr. Speaker.

Now you recall that in last year's budget, we had a projection as to what the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was going to contribute to balancing the books, as the Minister of Finance likes to refer to that term so loosely. They didn't even . . . they didn't come close to that level. They had to rely much more significantly on that Fiscal Stabilization Fund which really means rely more heavily on growing the debt of this province.

Mr. Speaker, while the debt of this province continues to rise, we need to look at the numbers that currently exist. And you know, the Minister of Finance says, well we do use summary financial statements; we do use all of the economic picture of the province. That is not so, because the only time the members in this Legislative Assembly, the people of Saskatchewan, see the financial statements is about six months after the fact, Mr. Speaker.

And we do have to look at the debt of this province because the auditor, on page 33 of his Fall Report — and this is the first time that we've had a chance to look at this report in this Legislative Assembly because we did not have a fall session like the Premier promised back on July 6 — we look at the debt of this province and, in fact, in 1999, the accumulated debt of both the Crown corporations and the General Revenue Fund was 11.2 billion. In the year 2000, it was 11.1 billion, and in the year 2001, it was 11.1 billion. And now, Mr. Speaker, as we look at this current budget, we look at the debt of this province and we're now at \$11.4 billion.

(11:00)

Mr. Speaker, that's also after we have just received, the Government of Saskatchewan has just received \$230 million net from the sale of Cameco shares — \$200 million. The Minister of Social Services better pay attention because he likes numbers. He has to recognize that the debt of this province would have grown to 11.6 billion had not the government sold Cameco shares.

Now it's very ironic that the NDP would stand in this House and criticize anyone who would look at the efficiencies of government, who would look at Crown corporations, who would look at shares and say, oh, you can't sell anything, when in fact they have just totally eliminated all of the Cameco shares at a net value of \$230 million.

Mr. Speaker, the debt of this province is growing, it is growing significantly at \$11.6 billion less the amount of revenue from Cameco. That's the exact opposite of what this government said they were going to do in the early part of the '90s. They said, we were going to restructure, we were going to ensure that the debt comes down. I recall the various ministers of Finance standing in their place and saying one-third to debt retirement, one-third to new programs, and one-third to tax cuts.

Guess what's happening, Mr. Speaker? Debt is going up, debt is going up. We're seeing the reliance on communities. We're seeing the government force property tax increases. They will occur not only at the municipal level, but they will occur at the school board level, Mr. Speaker.

One of their other creative, Mr. Speaker, one of their other creative bookkeeping entries this time around is called the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation. Now while we recognize, we recognize and people across Saskatchewan recognize, that some 10 years ago, the amount of monies allocated for capital construction of schools alone in the K to 12 program was upwards of \$75 million. And since then that budget has fallen to the point where last year, I believe, it was just in the neighbourhood of \$25 million.

There is a tremendous need to do renovations, to do constructions. But you have to be able to be held accountable, Mr. Speaker. The accounting for expenditures on amortized basis, on a depreciation basis, those types of controls must be maintained here in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, not in a Crown corporation — not in a Crown corporation outside of this building.

For years we've talked about the fact that this province's economy, the entire fiscal position of this province . . . of the province of Saskatchewan, only about 60 per cent is actually debated in the General Revenue Fund. Where we have the ability along with all of the third parties, along with people in Saskatchewan to look at the numbers presented — only 60 per cent. The other 40 per cent is out there in these Crown corporation, it's hidden.

And now, Mr. Speaker, they are even enlarging that, by now hiding that \$90 million worth of capital funding is now going to be hid in Crown corporations even further.

No plan to when this will be paid back. No plan for how this will work over the next number of years. I'm sure that if the school boards spend the \$40 million this year that's allocated to them, they will need at least \$40 million next year and the year after and the year after. There's no plan as to how this will be paid back, how it will be amortized.

Mr. Speaker, we're moving into the huge massive debts of the '80s again. We're moving into the debts of the '70s when the Blakeney administration used to use Crown corporations as a way of hiding its debt so that the people of Saskatchewan weren't there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize further that if this government — if this government — is committed to ensuring that Crown corporations, which are going to contribute \$300 million to this budget, if they are committed to the fact that now they want to use an amortized funding that's going to be spread out over a period of time, they must do that on a complete financial picture. And we refer to that as the summary financial statements.

And I want to enter into the record, Mr. Speaker, from the auditor's Fall Report 2001, Volume 1 on page 22 the following quote from the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan says this:

It is time for Saskatchewan to change. The Government should focus its overall financial planning information on the entire Government. For several years, we have recommended that the Government base its overall financial plan on the entire Government.

Across Canada, seven provincial governments and the Federal Government have already changed the focus of their financial planning information to include (their governments) their entire governments.

Mr. Speaker, that's the position that we have taken as an official opposition. That's the position that the auditor has taken. That's the position of seven other provinces already. Open, accountable, transparent.

The fact that we in this Legislative Assembly, on both sides of the House, would have the ability to look at the objectives, to look at the plans of Crown corporations, of agencies, of departments of Education through the General Revenue Fund and to then assess: can we afford to do what the current government is planning. If you don't have those plans, the question is the same question that the people of Saskatchewan were asking yesterday. What is the real deficit of this current budget?

We won't know. We won't know until next March when, finally, we'll have had a chance to take a look at what Crowns have done. Did Crowns actually turn a profit of \$300 million to be able to transfer that \$300 million to the government? What if they don't? What if they have to borrow that money?

We're already borrowing \$225 million from this imaginary Fiscal Stabilization Fund and creating a debt. We're moving \$90 million into another Crown corporation and asking that Crown corporation to borrow that money on behalf of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

We have created a situation where the debt could be anywhere, as I've said, from 400 million to 700 million. Nobody knows, Mr. Speaker. This is not transparent. This is not an accounting method that the people of Saskatchewan expected, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, in the budget there are a number of additional changes that have been forecast. And when you take a look at the Crown corporation debt, the entire debt of the province, it's interesting to note not only have they created the education fund and have now put \$89 million into that fund, but there's also another fund that continues to grow, another Crown corporation. We're still wondering, you know, exactly what that Crown corporation is doing. That's the Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the estimates in 2002 for the debt of that corporation was going to be 31.6 million — 31.6. Well it's been revised. The actual forecast for the end of 2002, March 31, just a few days away, is going to be 55 million. Missed the mark by 24 million.

And the other thing now, Mr. Speaker, is we're seeing that that debt is going to rise to as much as 62 million. Again, estimate, Mr. Speaker. Estimate of 62 million. We won't know what will actually happen when we get to March 31 of 2003.

Mr. Speaker, a Crown corporation that we in this Assembly do not have its objectives, we don't have its business plan, we don't have its financial statements, we don't have its revenue projections, we don't have its expenditure, are now saying to the people of Saskatchewan: trust us, we want \$62 million more of debt.

This is silly, Mr. Speaker. We need to develop a plan in this Legislative Assembly that takes an entire look at all of the finances of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I do want to spend a couple of moments talking about some of the decisions made in the budget and how they're going to affect all of the people in the province of Saskatchewan, but specifically some of the people in Canora-Pelly.

Let's take a look at agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Ag estimates this year, Ag estimates are indicating that they are going to be looking at an enhanced crop insurance program — \$14 million of additional monies provided in crop insurance at a time, of course, that they've implemented the forage program and that they're looking at some enhanced values of production. That is to be applauded. In fact that they are recognizing that the coverage is there for the fact that the price of products, price of commodities has increased.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the elimination of the spot loss hail is something that farmers are just starting to recognize. And I want to give an example, Mr. Speaker, of an individual in Canora-Pelly. This gentleman has always insured his crops through Crop Insurance and he's taken the 70 per cent coverage with spot loss hail. That was the maximum coverage attainable. And of course the spot loss hail portion was shared funding. The provincial government paid a portion of that spot loss hail, the producer paid a portion of that spot loss hail, and so did the federal government. That's how the premium was covered.

This government has decided that spot loss hail isn't a coverage we're going to provide any longer. What they've basically done is said to the federal government, keep your share; we don't want your share.

An Hon. Member: — . . . and a half million.

Mr. Krawetz: — Member for Kindersley points out seventeen and a half million dollars of federal money now is outside of the province. And we're not funding spot loss hail as a provincial government any more, so no coverage from the province.

Now let's look at the producer. Producer says, for this coming year I still want to have crop insurance, 70 per cent coverage, but now I have to go and buy hail insurance through line companies.

Well that premium that was shared jointly is now the sole responsibility of that farmer. So when we take a look at an average farmer, the cost that some farmers have worked out as maintaining the identical type of hail coverage, that cost is going to be 100 per cent the responsibility of the farmer. It may cost anywhere between 5 and \$7,000 additional premium to the producer. So this budget has downloaded onto the farmer. It has said to the farmer, we're no longer there to support you, we're not going to provide you spot loss hail, look after yourself, and, by the way, the entire premium is yours.

We've been criticized by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, for the fact that we're not pushing the federal government for more money. We're not, we're not asking the federal government for more money. Well what did this government do? It just has allowed the federal government to keep that portion of its funding for spot loss hail.

It's incredible, Mr. Speaker, to listen to the Minister of

Agriculture when he says, that, you know, the federal government is at fault for not enhancing the program. They wiped out spot loss hail, the federal government didn't.

Now the other part to this story, Mr. Speaker, is to take a look at revenues. Take a look at what's going to happen now to revenue. If — and I'm not clear on the exact dollars of how much hail coverage was written by Crop Insurance, but we understand it was something in that \$20 million range, Mr. Speaker — if that coverage now is no longer through Crop Insurance and it's moved to line companies, all of the hail companies that exist and sell hail insurance in this province, \$20 million.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that all hail companies pay the premium, a percentage of premium tax to the provincial government? That tax is 3 per cent. So now if that \$20 million worth of hail insurance is written by line companies, they will achieve a revenue source. That revenue source will be 3 per cent of that 20 million, or approximately a half a million dollars — \$600,000. That's additional monies now that the farmers have to pay upfront. It's going to the hail companies and it's now coming back to the government. An interesting way of balancing the books, by relying on the backs of the farmers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan farmers are also going to find out now that the property tax rebate which has been \$25 million across the province — that program is gone. So if there were farmers who were looking forward to a rebate on their portion of education property tax, that also disappeared. So you now have an additional coverage that you need to understand — an additional cost, I should say — that's going to be borne by the farmers.

(11:15)

Mr. Speaker, a very important area of concern to people in — right across Saskatchewan — but especially in Canora-Pelly is health care and the provision of health services. And I want to talk a bit about the Preeceville Hospital project.

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of letters of communication from the mayor of Preeceville, Mr. Grant See, and the Minister of Health's letters back to the mayor. Preeceville has for a number of years recognized that the current facilities are not adequate. And they need to ensure that both acute care through the hospitals and all of their provisions are met along with long-term care. So they're proposing an addition to their facility right now, the acute care facility, that's going to put in place a 47-bed long-term and multi-purpose facility.

Mr. Speaker, they've been . . . the community has been raising money at the local level. They've been working hard. There are a lot of committed individuals and the town itself is very committed to this project because they were told they would have to come up with \$1.6 million to be raised locally.

Mr. Speaker, in a letter from the mayor, he's stating that all of that money is in place. And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that because of the Mushers Rendezvous, which has been an annual thing in Preeceville every spring now for a number of years, where they have large amount of competition in dog races, they

have raised monies, and there have been donations, that now that fund that has been raised locally sits at \$700,000. And the town has committed the additional municipal funding necessary to meet the goal of 1.6.

So the mayor met with the Minister of Health at the urban municipal convention and said, we need to get moving. We need to have the Department of Health make its decision and allow us to get moving.

And this is the letter that the mayor received, and it's dated March 21, 2002:

I appreciated meeting with you at the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association convention to discuss planning for this facility. As I noted in our conversation, projects that were previously recommended for planning will need to be re-evaluated. At this time, approval for funding cannot proceed because the current status of planning . . . beyond the current status of planning for this facility.

Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Health is saying, it doesn't matter about all your hard work, it doesn't matter about the fact that you've met your obligation of 1.6 million, doesn't matter about the fact that he's impressed with the level of support in this project and the commitment of all the people — you can't go ahead. You can't go ahead planning a facility that's going to meet the needs of hundreds, literally thousands, of people in that Preeceville area.

Mr. Speaker, we need hope. We need vision. We need a plan that's going to ensure that that Preeceville health facility is constructed so that it's operating, so that people who are looking at that area and saying you know, maybe we should buy a business in Preeceville . . . Maybe they're from Alberta or Manitoba or some other province. They need to see that indeed that this government is committed as much as the people of Preeceville — and they're not, Mr. Speaker, because of this kind of delay and procrastination.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other concerns of many people in the area is the waiting list as to when surgery that's needed can be performed. And I've had a number of letters from Dr. McKitterick. Dr. McKitterick is the medical doctor in Norquay and Norquay, by the way, Mr. Speaker, isn't even a hospital. It is a health centre and Dr. McKitterick provides very good medical service to all of the people in Norquay and area.

His concern though is with the fact that the regional hospital which is at Yorkton, which is supposed to provide all of the needs of the people . . . one of the surgeons there is Dr. Van Sittert, and this is a letter of March 7, 2002 from Dr. McKitterick to myself and it says this:

Between Dr. Van Sittert and Dr. Henning, there were 10 major joint replacements performed per week around three to four years ago in Yorkton. (By the way, Dr. Henning is no longer in Yorkton.) Dr. Van Sittert is now looking at a waiting list of four years to be able to perform a hip or knee replacement.

Mr. Speaker, how can people sit on a waiting list, a waiting list, waiting for three years, four years? This is a situation that has to

be remedied and all we've heard from the Minister of Health and the government opposite for the last two years is we're going to study it; we're going to put in place an action plan; we're going to deal with the waiting lists. And you know what happened? The waiting lists grew, Mr. Speaker. The waiting lists have grown right across this province.

We need to address these concerns of individuals in this province. This budget did not do that, Mr. Speaker. This budget did not address the fact that health facilities in this province are going to experience grave conditions, Mr. Speaker. They're going to experience grave conditions because they will lack the number of professionals needed to upkeep and to maintain the services at those facilities.

And I want to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, one concern from the medical laboratory technologists, the MLTs in this province. The medical laboratory technologists program right now graduates about 16 people per year. That's all, 16 people. And in the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker, the average of people staying after they graduate in the province of Saskatchewan is about 10. So six don't even look at Saskatchewan; they move elsewhere. Ten stay.

Mr. Speaker, because we're in that baby boomer point in our society where baby boomers are nearing retirement, a number of retirements are occurring in the MLT field. That number is somewhere between 18 and 22 per year for the next numbers of years.

Mr. Speaker, if you're only getting 10 graduates to stay in the province of Saskatchewan and you need 20 just to replace the ones that are retiring, think of the predicament we're going to be in after that happens for four or five years. You know what will close facilities, Mr. Speaker? It won't be the fact that the government doesn't provide funding or that people are not using the services. It will be because we don't have the professionals to maintain those facilities.

And this budget did not take that into consideration. It did not look at planning. We haven't seen planning from this government for a number of years in terms of enhancing the training positions for registered nurses, for LPNs (licensed practical nurse), for MLTs. We need to enhance those training positions so that we can have a far greater number of graduates, so that now there will be people to meet all those needs.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other concerns in my constituency is in the area of infrastructure. And over the last number of days my colleagues in the opposition have been raising with the minister responsible for Municipal Affairs and Environment the concerns expressed about adequate water supplies, adequate safe water supplies.

Two communities, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency who are very concerned about this are the communities of Foam Lake and the small, little community of Arran. The community of Foam Lake recognized a number of years ago that it was dependent upon surface waters, surface water for providing the entire town of Foam Lake with an adequate water supply. And they recognized that in a year of drought there may be a problem.

So they applied to the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program last year in a hope that they would be able to drill new wells, create a new water system. Mr. Speaker, they were turned down. They were turned down and they said that their application was . . . didn't rate high enough. It didn't rate high enough and, please, apply next year — a familiar story for communities like Perdue and others.

Well, Mr. Speaker, another community in my constituency is the small, little town of Arran. Arran has about 55 residents, Mr. Speaker, and they too rely on shallow wells. About a month ago the mayor of Arran, Mr. Rick Nahnybida called me, and Rick said that, you know, one of our wells looks like it has gone dry or it's froze or the sand has plugged it. We are now in a position where our water supply for the village is only about half of what we need.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, without even getting any further financial support from this government, the mayor took his own water tank, his own vehicle, and he's now hauling water from a farmer to put it into the cistern in Arran, treat it appropriately, and to put that into the water system. But that only lasted about a week and a half, and the second well ended up going dry. There is no water supply at all in Arran now, Mr. Speaker.

So the village council, through the mayor, contacted the Department of Municipal Affairs, they contacted Sask Water, and they said: we have an emergency; we know we have to deal with this problem in the spring as far as drilling wells, but we have an emergency right now.

One of his quotes, Mr. Speaker, that appeared in the paper from the mayor is this:

We're not asking for \$10,000, not even \$8,000. All we want is a couple of thousand . . . (dollars)," Nahnybida said. "If not, we're going to have to put on a dance or sell some raffle tickets or something to raise the money."

Mr. Speaker, this is a community that turned to the Department of Municipal Affairs, to Sask Water, to say, we have an emergency. We need to be able to hire somebody to haul water until we can determine through investigation from Sask Water as to what we're going to do with this problem. They've been turned down.

Now the mayor and others in this community are busy hauling water themselves to ensure that they meet the obligations that this government has reneged on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other concerns in my constituency is about taxation. And we've had a lot of people look at their 2001 income tax forms and are saying, I thought I was promised a change by this Minister of Finance; I thought that I was going to be paying less tax.

Well there's some interesting developments, Mr. Speaker. And I want to read a letter of February 18 that was addressed to the Premier which the . . . it is from an accounting firm and it says this, Mr. Speaker:

. . . we did not read and have not heard about the cancellation of the Saskatchewan Tax Credit available to

tax payers of Saskatchewan for the year 2001, which was previously available by completing the TIC Saskatchewan form, until our office realized the “No” Saskatchewan Tax reduction when receiving notices of assessments . . .

Mr. Speaker, this is an accountant and now recognizes that, while the government has lowered the tax rate, they have removed some of the tax credits. And in the end, the people that they said they were going to help are now looking at the situation where the \$200 tax credit that was used — and again it would be used entirely by those people in a lower income — has disappeared.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read into the record the tax rates of the provinces and the territories for the year 2001, because not all of the provinces have had their budgets presented for 2002, and we don't know what all the tax rates are.

Each of the provinces has moved now into the new system of taxing and they're looking at putting on . . . a tax level on the first 29,000 or 30,000, or as in the case of Saskatchewan it is exactly 30,000; all of the provinces have more or less the same, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not going to read in each of those values.

But here are the first tax rates for that first level of income: Newfoundland, 10.57 per cent; Prince Edward Island, 9.8 per cent; Nova Scotia, 9.77 per cent; New Brunswick, 9.68 per cent; Ontario, 6.16 per cent; Manitoba, 10.9 per cent; Alberta, 10 per cent on all of their levels, by the way; British Columbia, 7.3 per cent; Yukon Territory, 7.36 per cent; Northwest Territories and Nunavut, 7.2 per cent. And now we get to Saskatchewan, 11.5 per cent — the highest level of taxation on the first level of income.

The level of income for people that are on minimum-paying jobs, on lower jobs, on beginning jobs, our young people that are beginning in the province of Saskatchewan, are paying the highest tax rate in 2001.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's just take a look at what would happen, as the Minister of Finance has said, in 2002. On January 1 we received one-quarter of one per cent reduction, Mr. Speaker. From 11.5, we could now read in 11.25. And, Mr. Speaker, that still would be the highest number of all of those percentages that I have entered into the record.

So, Mr. Speaker, when people in Saskatchewan take a look at what this government has done in saying dramatic tax increases, they have to look at what it is relative to the rest of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Because we are in a global economy; we are in a competitive position; and to attract and keep our people in Saskatchewan, tax cuts are necessary, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:30)

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, you know, there's so many things in this budget that the opposition members are going to bring to the attention of people in Saskatchewan in all of the various departments. And I know my colleagues are looking forward to presenting what this government is trying to disguise, what this government is trying to hide in the way of a

deficit, in the way of a lack of commitment in all of the various departments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will give them that opportunity by ending my comments this morning by stating that this deficit is huge, Mr. Speaker. This is a debt that is growing in the province of Saskatchewan. We are mortgaging our children's future in this document. The simple way to describe this budget, Mr. Speaker: it is a fudge-it budget.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move an amendment to the motion and I would move that, seconded by the member of Kindersley:

That all the words after “Assembly” be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

Condemns the provincial government for its decision to return to a massive budget deficit and its attempt to hide this deficit through accounting changes and questionable revenue forecasts; and that this Assembly regrets the provincial government's failure to put forward any kind of plan to grow Saskatchewan in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly my pleasure to enter the budget debate here this morning and second the motion by my hon. colleague.

Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that people all over Saskatchewan are paying a great deal of attention to, I think. They are certainly reading the newspapers, reading the clippings from around the province. And they see clippings out of *The StarPhoenix* in Saskatoon “End budget games” speaking to all of the concerns that the editorialist of *The StarPhoenix* have, putting the Minister of Finance into some rather illustrious company when it comes to Finance ministers of the past, suggesting that the games that are being played in this budget by the Minister of Finance and the NDP opposite are something that they should not be that proud of, something that the people of Saskatchewan should be very wary of, something that the people of Saskatchewan should not be prepared to accept the arguments that the members opposite are presenting to the people of Saskatchewan.

This is, this is . . . a fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that people all over the province now are, as they are saying here, holding their noses at this budget. Very concerned about the fact that now we've slipped into a massive, massive deficit here in Saskatchewan, and no amount of jiggery-pokery opposite suggesting that they've got this Fiscal Stabilization Fund is going to gloss over those facts.

People are beginning to . . . people are looking at this, the papers, the media people around this province are wondering how they can possibility meet their income targets that they are suggesting that they have before them. Fifty-one million dollars of sales revenue, clearly when the province's sales, retail sales are not going up at any kind of a rate that would even come close to matching that.

They'll come about halfway, it would appear, Mr. Speaker, in terms of that goal. That is if we reach the goals in terms of retail sales, and there's lots of reasons to suggest that they may be off the mark as well, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, they are taking money in from the Crown corporations at any alarming rate, more so than the Crown corporations can meet using a little Allan Blakeney strategy from the past; a well-used NDP strategy of hiding deficits in the Crown corporations, driving the debt up in the Crown corporations and then saying that it has nothing to do with the finances of the province of Saskatchewan. The Crown corporations have self-liquidating methods of addressing the debt.

Clearly the people of Saskatchewan see through that. Everyone knows anybody that has any degree of sophistication when it comes to financial management would clearly understand that by driving the debt up of the Crown corporations, they're driving the debt up of the whole province of Saskatchewan onto the backs of our children, our children's children, and so on after that, Mr. Speaker.

The troubling part as well is that they've entered into this style of accounting that would make an Enron executive blush, Enron employee blush, Mr. Speaker. They clearly are entering back in the days of the Gary Lane-style of budgeting that was roundly criticized by the NDP at the time.

I don't know whether . . . there aren't all that many members opposite that are still around from the Gary Lane budget days, but I'm sure they will recall their comments at the time when Mr. Lane was presenting a budget that had that style of accounting in it. And they were sharply critical of it at the time, Mr. Speaker, as everyone in the province remembers — sharply critical of exactly what they are doing today.

And somehow or another what was done in the past was terrible and reprehensible but when the NDP does it, somehow or another it's a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It's that style that the NDP . . . that the people of Saskatchewan have learned about the NDP opposite over many, many years of experience.

The members opposite come to the legislature with a higher calling than anyone else. A sanctimonious way of governing a province. It is always, it is always, when the NDP are in government, it's always someone else's fault for the misfortunes of Saskatchewan. If it isn't the federal government, if it isn't the federal government, it's the farmers; if it isn't the farmers, it's the oil people in this province; if it isn't them, it's somebody else.

And in fact on the front page of today's newspaper the Premier of this province went so far as to blame Osama Bin Laden for the troubles that we are having here in Saskatchewan. Well clearly Osama Bin Laden is responsible for a lot of things, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of problems that North America has faced in the last little while, but to suggest that the reason why they have to make these budgetary decisions is because of Osama Bin Laden, I think is quite a stretch for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — They're breaking, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that they are breaking their own laws now. In 1992 Don Gass — the commission to change the way the province of Saskatchewan reported fiscal matters that the NDP brought in back then — now this government opposite is breaking those regulations and laws that were introduced at that time, Mr. Speaker.

According to *The StarPhoenix* editorial, "concocting odious bookkeeping methods." That must be something that the members opposite can be real proud of. That was something that they roundly criticized previous administrations of all stripes for, and now they have that kind of history to add to their illustrious history in government over the last 10 years here in Saskatchewan.

Without transparent accounting . . . The editorial goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

Without . . . transparent accounting, taxpayers have no clear idea . . . (of how to trust the) true level of indebtedness (of this province), hampering greatly their ability to evaluate government actions and spending decisions.

Mr. Speaker, that has been what the NDP have always claimed was the hallmark of their government — fiscal integrity, fiscal responsibility. Well, Mr. Speaker, in the budget of yesterday I think the people of Saskatchewan will agree with me when I say that they have abandoned that history. They have moved into a history, into an area, that I don't think they really wanted to go but they felt that they had to because they've got a budget that doesn't make sense, they've got a budget that doesn't add up.

They don't have a plan for the people of Saskatchewan and it's becoming more and more obvious to the people of this province every day that the one thing that this government hasn't done, which they should do to try and gain any kind of respectability back, is to call an election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And if it wasn't for a couple of misplaced Liberals over there, we would have that election, Mr. Speaker.

And the editorialists go on and they agree with us when we say they should call an election. This government should call one, they say, and the sooner the better, to clear the air. After all, Mr. Speaker, we have to keep in mind that we have a Premier sitting in the Premier's office today that wasn't elected by the people of Saskatchewan.

We understand how the process works and the people of Saskatchewan understand how the process works. He was elected by their party and he has a rightful place to take that seat. But he also has an obligation to the people of Saskatchewan if he plans on sharply changing the direction of this province. If he was just going to carry on with what they did before, I suppose you could cut him a little room.

But if his plan is to sharply deviate from the past, he has a moral obligation — a moral obligation — to take it to the people of Saskatchewan and put it before them and say, here's

the direction I want to take this province. That hasn't happened, Mr. Speaker. We don't expect it's going to happen. As long as he's got those two Liberals heeled in as well as they are, it won't happen either likely, Mr. Speaker. But clearly the people of Saskatchewan would want that to happen, Mr. Speaker.

You start looking at the clippings from around the province about this budget and many, many people, group after group after group, aren't all that encouraged by what they're seeing. Education groups — unhappy. Agriculture groups — unhappy. Rural municipalities — unhappy. People that have concerns about highway construction — unhappy. People who have concerns about water quality in this province — unhappy.

The minister opposite — it's amazing, Mr. Speaker — the ministers opposite stand in their place and say they're going to do what they can to protect the quality of water here in this province and then they slash the budget for water quality studies and water quality testing programs by \$1 billion. That's the kind of commitment that they have to providing quality water for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I want to talk a little bit this morning about the department that I'm the critic for and that's the Department of Agriculture. We've seen, Mr. Speaker, in agriculture, probably you would have to go back to when the NDP opposite tore up the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts to see a comparable assault on rural Saskatchewan. You would have to go back to that time frame.

But what we saw in the last about 10 days here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is first of all the government opposite bringing in some changes to the crop insurance department. Very, very serious changes to the crop insurance department that I think they felt probably that the farmers of this province wouldn't even notice. But, of course, the farmers are getting their hail . . . or I mean their crop insurance information right now and they are noticing big time. Our offices all over this province are getting calls just constantly and I suspect the Minister of Agriculture's office is getting them as well.

What they are saying is, at a time in Saskatchewan when we have just come off of a historical drought, a drought of historical proportions, one that compares easily with any of the dry years in the 1930s, easily with those . . . In fact, many reporting stations, weather reporting stations in Saskatchewan have less rainfall in the year 2001 than any of the years in the 1930s.

When we've come off of the worst drought in history, and unfortunately — and I say very unfortunately — we may be faced with another one here in Saskatchewan on about . . . About two-thirds of the province, perhaps even more than that, Mr. Speaker, has historically low soil moisture levels here in Saskatchewan, and there's virtually no snow across this province to speak of.

We have a government opposite wanting to continue to strip away one of the most important safety net features that farmers have in this province; that's the Crop Insurance Corporation and the programs available within that program.

The spot loss hail provisions were an important feature. It was something that the government opposite, when they put it back a few years ago did the right thing, but now they've removed it. And the removal of that, Mr. Speaker, comes with it two entities that benefit very, very nicely — very, very nicely. There are two entities that benefit very nicely from the changes in the spot loss hail program.

(11:45)

First of all, farmers are hurt dramatically. But in a written question that we submitted to the government opposite and got back on March 26, we asked the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: How much in terms of dollars did each of the following parties contribute to the spot-loss hail coverage portion of the 2001 Saskatchewan Crop Insurance program: the federal government; the provincial government; (and) farmers?

And the answer we got back:

As (of) . . . February 28, 2002, premiums for the 2001 spot-loss hail program under (the) . . . Crop Insurance (Corporation were) . . . as follows:

There are two entities that benefited from the changes, Mr. Speaker, and one huge, huge loser in this. The Government of Saskatchewan last year, on behalf of farmers in this province, contributed \$17,484,799 — 17 and a half million dollars, they contributed. The province of Saskatchewan contributed exactly the same amount — 17 and a half million dollars. And the farmers contributed \$23.3 million to that program.

So by making the changes to that provision alone, the Government of Saskatchewan no longer has an obligation to Crop Insurance to pay 17 and a half million dollars and neither does the federal government.

So while the Minister of Agriculture goes around this province and tells the farmers of this province he's doing everything he can to help them, he just took off the table for his government 17 and a half million dollars. But probably the most reprehensible part of this is, is he also took off the table 17 and a half million dollars of federal government money off the table.

And then he has the . . . The Finance Minister has the gall, Mr. Speaker, in the budget yesterday to tell the farmers of Saskatchewan that they've put \$14 million into the program. They took off 17 and a half million dollars on spot loss twice — twice, the federal government's contribution and the provincial government's contribution. They took those away; \$35 million disappeared right there.

We're trying to get the information on the variable price option as well. I suspect it'll be a very, very significant number that both the provincial government and the federal government took off the table there as well, Mr. Speaker. And the Minister of Finance says we put \$14 million back in.

The only reason, Mr. Speaker, the only reason . . . And farmers

understand how this program works. The only reason that the province of Saskatchewan is even able to say that they put money back in is because the change that there has been from last year to this year has been in two areas, Mr. Speaker.

One of them is in coverage in terms of yield and the other one is in coverage in terms of price per commodity. Each commodity that farmers grow, wheat, durum, oats, barley, on you go, they are each assigned a value. That's how you calculate the coverage times the value to give you your per acre coverage levels.

Well those levels have all changed, Mr. Speaker. The commodity price levels have all changed, and fortunately for farmers, they've gone up a little bit in the last little while. Grain markets in the world are responding a little bit in the last little while to the possibility of a poor winter wheat crop in the US (United States) and poor crops on a worldwide basis, and we've started to see some . . . a little bit of a rise in prices for commodities, fortunately. That's one good thing that's happening for farmers.

But what that means to the province and what it means to farmers, obviously, is, is because there's a rise in the coverage levels for the prices that farmers can guarantee, there's also a corresponding rise in the premiums. And that accounts for every dime of the \$14 million that this government is putting in. It has nothing to do with the government putting money in, but has everything to do with them having a statutory obligation to put it in. That's what it means.

And the farmers of Saskatchewan clearly understand that. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we're getting call after call after call from farmers across this province saying at the worst possible time what can we count on the NDP to do when it comes to agriculture.

We can strip crop insurance of \$35 million of contributions from the provincial and federal government. We can strip them of the variable right policies which will amount — I think it's in the range of about 25 per cent of the producers take that option, Mr. Speaker. So I'm guessing that'll be into the tens of millions of dollars, again, that has been taken off the . . . we're trying to get that information from the Crop Insurance department right now, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully they will comply. Hopefully, they will comply. I say that guardedly, because I suspect the government opposite doesn't want that information out there. But hopefully, they'll comply.

Their commitment to an open government we'll be testing here in the next few days when we submit that question to the Crop Insurance department. But we'll be testing that to find out what that cost is to farmers as well. And what benefit there was to the province and what benefit there was to the federal government on top of that, Mr. Speaker.

They stripped away those two features that were very important within the program. And, then what did they do yesterday on top of all of that? If that wasn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, if that wasn't bad enough, then yesterday they come in and strip one other thing away from farmers that had a \$25 million price tag associated with it — the property tax rebates that farmers have just got. Farmers just received their benefits from last year here

in the last few days. And farmers all over the province were grateful for that change that they made in the last two years previous, but it averaged about \$1,000 for a farm family here in Saskatchewan. So that was an additional thing that the government stripped away.

So on top of the \$35 million out of crop insurance and growing — because we don't know the variable price, what that cost farmers as well — on top of that, \$25 million of property tax rebates disappeared from this government yesterday. And I suspect in some of these fees that we have to do our work to ferret out of this government — I suspect that there's probably some changes in there as well to farm families here in this province.

Farmers are taking — as I said earlier — a massive, massive hit from this government at a time when they've just come off a drought and unfortunately may be headed into another drought, Mr. Speaker.

And as a way of hopefully . . . and as a way of . . . the NDP way of trying to mollify the farmers a little bit, they bring in a little of what they thought might be a plum for the farmers. They bring in this new forage protection, and they bring in this . . . the annual crop protection feature. And this is bizarre beyond belief, Mr. Speaker. This one is bizarre beyond belief — the Serby derby, as we're calling it, Mr. Speaker. And . . .

The Speaker: — I just remind the member once again not to refer to members by their name, but rather by their titles or by their constituencies.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, there's another name for it that farmers are calling it as well: rainfall roulette. And the reason they call it that is really quite simple, Mr. Speaker. If you're familiar with gambling — and unfortunately there are all too many people in Saskatchewan familiar with that — but if you're familiar with gambling, this is an opportunity for farmers to gamble at any time of the year.

You know at certain times of the season, Mr. Speaker, farmers don't have the occasion to visit the VLT (video lottery terminal) places all that often. So now, Mr. Speaker, we've got to put something in place for farmers so that they can gamble. I guess that's the logic behind it. I can't think of any other logic behind it, because it defies logic, Mr. Speaker.

So what they are saying to farmers is, is pick a weather station across Saskatchewan — apparently there's one in Manitoba, and there's one in Alberta you can pick as well — pick a rainfall station, any rainfall station, pick any one of them, and bet on it, Mr. Speaker.

And they've got a premium table or essentially for about 60 cents an acre premium, you get about \$7 worth of action. I think that's how they phrase it when you're in places like Las Vegas. So for 60 cents, you can have \$7 worth of action.

And if that particular rainfall station that you picked, Mr. Speaker, has the unfortunate circumstance of suffering continued drought, you're a winner. You're a winner. That's how it works, Mr. Speaker. So the NDP now have gone from having a program that had some pretty good components in it in

crop insurance, the spot loss and the variable rate protection, to putting in a rainfall-type lottery.

So instead of this government saying they want to have a way of creating opportunity and hope in Saskatchewan, here's what you have today: you will have people all over Saskatchewan picking rainfall stations from anywhere in the province and then hoping among hope, sitting there at home every night thinking to themselves, I hope those poor people over at Rosthern or those poor people over at Leader, or wherever you happened to bet on, suffer a drought. If that isn't the most shameful way of having an insurance program, I don't know what it is.

I was speaking yesterday, Mr. Speaker, to a number of . . . and we have been to, I think we've touched virtually every rural newspaper in Saskatchewan in the last few weeks. They've been calling. They're in disbelief, Mr. Speaker. They call and ask you to explain it to them. We explain it to them; we fax out the information to them.

First of all they're astounded. It usually takes them a few days to even absorb the information. And then they call back and ask you, is this really how this works? Is this really how this works?

In fact one reporter from a rural newspaper yesterday said to me, Mr. Speaker, he made the comment: I'm not sure I understand how this works, but if you apply it to car insurance, it would be like me buying a car . . . pardon me, me living in Kindersley, buying a car in Yorkton, and then hoping, hoping that that car in Yorkton had a wreck and then I could get my car back in Kindersley repainted.

That's what it means . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, hope your neighbour's house burns down so you'll benefit back in Kindersley. Hope your neighbour over here . . . hope your neighbour on this side of the province has a drought so you can benefit. That is bizarre beyond belief.

If you could pick a way of determining that, Mr. Speaker, I think there's many farmers will be sitting down . . . They've only got a couple more days to do this, incidentally. They limited the time frame when you can do this. It's like the NDP croupier saying that, place your bets, but they have to be down soon, Mr. Speaker. March 31 is the cut-off for this rainfall roulette program, so you've got to put your money on the table soon. You've got to pick a number soon; you've got to pick a weather station soon.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure Environment Canada's Web site is getting a lot of hits from farmers across the province right now, looking at the rainfall averages for all of these 83 stations, and they may even pick the Coronation one, I think is the one in Alberta that you can pick. I'm not sure which the one in Manitoba is. But they're looking through those historical numbers right now and saying well, the average rainfall in Leader, Saskatchewan is about seven and a half inches a year, somewhere in that . . . seven and a half inches within the growing season, Mr. Speaker. But they're kind of in dry condition, I'm wondering whether this thing is going to continue or not.

Or should I take a bit of a flyer . . . should I take a bit of a flyer based on the odds and the premiums that you can calculate out

. . . we're calling them the odds, and that's essentially how you look at it, Mr. Speaker. If you flip the form over it tells you how to calculate your odds — that's what it says on the back of it — calculate your potential winnings here.

So you look down the premium tables; you look at where you hope they'll have some degree of bad fortune, Mr. Speaker, and then you make your decision based on that.

An Hon. Member: — Psychics dot-com . . .

Mr. Boyd: — Yes, exactly, Mr. Speaker. I expect many farmers are consulting with psychics these days to try and figure out where in Saskatchewan are they going to suffer misfortune. Where in Saskatchewan are you going to suffer misfortune?

Even in Las Vegas, I don't know of a program where you can bet on the rainfall. They bet on anything down in Las Vegas, if you've ever been there, Mr. Speaker. I've had occasion to be there a couple of times. You can bet on anything. You can bet on dogs; you can bet on basketball games; you can bet on horses; you can bet on baseball games, right down to the minor levels. But there's no rainfall roulette there.

The NDP have come up with a program that even the gambling mecca of the world, Las Vegas, hasn't been able to figure out, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And we have to wonder . . . we have to wonder which one of the members opposite came up with that one, Mr. Speaker. I'm betting . . . I'm betting that it may be the minister responsible for the corporation that lost \$28 million in potatoes, because if he applies that same kind of logic that he applied to losing \$28 million, that's the type of logic that you'd come up with this program on, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, if you recall, the business genius opposite came up with that, up with the line — he said we lost \$28 million, but it's been a good investment for the people of Saskatchewan.

(12:00)

Well Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I think he has a financial background. I think he has a financial background and I'd suggest that . . . I would suggest he may want to reconsider his opportunities after this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the shameful part of this is — and we're taking a rather wild look at this, Mr. Speaker — but the shameful part of it is, is the NDP have come up with a program that is bizarre beyond belief and is reprehensible and it's an insult to the people and the farm families of this province.

How can you possibly, how can you possibly claim that this is good public policy when you're asking farmers to pick a rainfall station — any rainfall station — and bet on it. Because that's what they're doing, Mr. Speaker.

And beyond that there's the bizarre little twists within this one. So if you, Mr. Speaker, if in rainfall roulette . . . you have to keep in mind there's a number of regulations within this that

you have to comply with.

So we've got farmer A over here down in Leader and he decides, well I want to pick my home station because it's dry here and unfortunately it may continue dry. But he doesn't get out his money quick enough and put it on the table. And all . . . a whole bunch of other farmers beat him to it — beat him to betting on that particular one. They've limited the amount of action that you can get in any one community, Mr. Speaker.

So you may have this bizarre circumstance of a farmer wanting to do probably what is the right thing and bet on his own community, which seems crazy beyond belief, but . . . betting on . . . wanting to bet on his own community, going into the crop insurance office, and the NDP croupier standing there — I suspect they got them all in tuxedos standing there, tuxedos standing there — and saying . . . I'm not sure how they do it when you're in Vegas but it's something . . . you know, they give the hand signal, you can no longer bet on that one. You're going to have to bet on another one, Mr. Speaker. All bets are down, I'm sorry.

You can hear . . . you can just . . . if you've been to Vegas you've heard those words before. All you have to do is go to the roulette table and you'll see it, Mr. Speaker.

So you'll have a farmer, perhaps in Leader, saying to himself, well I . . . if I can't bet on my home community I'm going to bet on the poor community of Melfort maybe. Maybe if I get lucky, maybe if I get lucky and they get really unlucky I'll get a piece of this action, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the type of program that we have in agriculture today. And that was, Mr. Speaker, going to be the plum for the farmers of this province to mollify them into hoping that . . . the NDP were hoping this, Mr. Speaker, that somehow or another if we brought in this bizarre little gambling twist into the Crop Insurance department that farmers would forget about the fact that they've lost the hail insurance — spot loss hail insurance — component, Mr. Speaker, and they've lost the variable rate protection that they've enjoyed for years.

Mr. Speaker, clearly what farmers were looking for in this budget and from this government in terms of changes to the Crop Insurance department, was an enhanced program. And that's what the Minister of Agriculture's been saying for months that he was going to negotiate with the federal government an enhanced program. Every time that minister goes down to Ottawa or picks up the phone and calls Lyle Vanclief in Ottawa, the farmers of Saskatchewan should be scared to death because there's something more that's going to disappear for them. This guy, Mr. Speaker . . . Unfortunately this Minister of Agriculture has a habit of negotiating farmers out of good programs rather than negotiating them into a good one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And, Mr. Speaker, it's little wonder, it's little wonder that the farm people of this province have abandoned this government in terms of support over the last number of years. And this is just going to be one more example of the reasons why farmer after farmer in this province will be voting

in the next election for the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, what we should have had in this budget, as we've said, was an enhanced program for crop insurance. We should have, as some of the agriculture reporters are saying . . . agriculture columnist, Kevin Hursh, is suggesting that we should have looked at increasing the spot loss hail provisions by adding it to the upper level.

Right now, Mr. Speaker . . . in the years past at least — not any longer, it's gone — but in the years past you could only take the spot loss hail provisions on the 70 per cent feature of crop insurance. There is also one higher level than that — 80 per cent coverage that you could opt for. And the ag reporter, Kevin Hursh, is suggesting that that's what this government should have looked at was increasing the opportunity for farmers on that end.

We also think that back in 1988, Mr. Speaker, when the province suffered the last significant drought here in Saskatchewan, the year after that what they did to try and help in terms of agriculture policy, what they tried to help with then was, Mr. Speaker, they didn't take into account the 1988 yield averages for the 1989 coverage.

And that's what we think they should have did this year as well. Instead of averaging them in over the 10-year average formula that's there, they should have taken that one out — an act-of-God-type clause — that it should have been removed so farmers wouldn't lose coverage in terms of bushels per acre, Mr. Speaker.

And that would have been a positive feature that farmers would have understand and appreciated, particularly — as we've been saying all along, Mr. Speaker — when you're faced with a province-wide drought as many farmers are.

In recent days, Mr. Speaker, we've been getting calls from a lot of people; we're getting letters from a lot of people. And one of the ones that was probably the most interesting, Mr. Speaker, is even, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board objects to your changes within the Crop Insurance Corporation, the loss of spot loss and the variable hail rates. And the reason that they have concerns, Mr. Speaker, is a valid reason.

One of the things that has been put in place in terms of helping with the agriculture crisis that we have in Saskatchewan right now, Mr. Speaker, is the spring cash advance program. And that really, what it really is, is that — excuse me, Mr. Speaker — what it really is, is an opportunity for farmers to take a cash advance on anticipated crop that they will grow in this upcoming season. And that program is in place again for farmers and I understand the applications are out and available right now, Mr. Speaker.

So that program, that program, Mr. Speaker, is an important feature for farmers having trouble raising operating capital for this planting season that we're almost into here in Saskatchewan.

It comes with it the opportunity to borrow from the federal

government, administered by the Canadian Wheat Board, a spring cash advance of about \$50,000 based on your acreage and a whole number of things. But essentially it offered a huge amount of opportunity for farmers and it was widely accepted by farmers. I don't recall the number right offhand, Mr. Speaker, but it was literally thousands and thousands of farmers used this program every spring.

But, Mr. Speaker, the problem with it is now, and what was . . . it was . . . there's an attachment to that program, a condition that you have to comply with. In order to take out the spring cash advance program, you have to buy crop insurance. So what has happened with this program now is in order for farmers to qualify for this year's, 2002's spring cash advance program, they have to buy crop insurance whether they like it or not.

And now they have to buy a crop insurance coverage and a policy that has less coverage for it; less coverage because we have lost spot loss and variable rate. You have to pay more for it, Mr. Speaker, and you also have the opportunity, if you want, to enter into this gambling program.

So, Mr. Speaker, it just again speaks to the need for this government to start looking at some real serious agriculture policy here in Saskatchewan rather than coming up with these kind of hare-brained schemes. It's no wonder, Mr. Speaker, that we have these types of programs being introduced, when you have a government opposite that has . . . thinks that the priorities for this government should be buying things like a dot-com in Atlanta, Georgia; who are investing in terms of infrastructure in places like Australia or Chile or Mexico or wherever it is their minions are out trying to buy up things around the world right now.

The captains of industry opposite right now, Mr. Speaker, are running all over the world looking at opportunities to buy things. It just is bizarre when you think about it. We've got needs within Saskatchewan; we've got concerns about education in Saskatchewan; we've got concerns about health care in Saskatchewan; we've got concerns about highways and agriculture and department after department after department; but this government's priorities seem to be for buying things like a dot-com in Atlanta, Georgia rather than taking a serious look at what the needs are of Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker.

And the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, is saying from his chair something along the lines that they're going to make money on this. Well if there's . . . the minister of . . . the new minister of . . . well he was the minister of Energy for a little while, but you kind of switched things around to hide a few things too. I don't know what his responsibilities are, but the minister that brought in the ethanol program, he said, within that department what they wanted to do was have private capital start this project. We support that.

But then he went on to say, but if CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) has someone come to them with an acceptable program, acceptable investment opportunity, they'll look at it. And he said, but they really don't want to get into picking winners and losers, Mr. Speaker. And that's quite an admission from a government opposite that has a track record of picking losers almost on every occasion — picking

losers on almost every occasion — 28 million bucks in potatoes but it's a successful venture.

Buying a dot-com in Atlanta, Georgia that doesn't have a single, solitary job attached to it for Saskatchewan people — but that's a great investment, Mr. Speaker. And when our critic for Crown corporations asked the minister opposite, why don't you bring that dot-com company back to Saskatchewan, repatriate it back to Saskatchewan, or bring it back here at least, put it in Saskatchewan — it never was a Saskatchewan company, I guess — but bring it to Saskatchewan, bring it to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Because as everyone knows, dot-com companies, Internet-based companies, can operate from anywhere in the world.

Instead of bringing it . . . when we asked the question about bringing it back to Saskatchewan, the minister says, it's a ridiculous notion. You have to operate apparently — according to NDP logic — you have to operate a dot-com company in Atlanta, Georgia. And somehow or another, that's supposed to benefit Saskatchewan people. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have the minister or the Crown corporation head that's invested into that Crown, or into that dot-com, saying that it's going to take some time before we, hopefully, see any kind of a return on this investment. We're going to have to pour millions and millions and millions of dollars into this venture, Mr. Speaker, before there's any hope that this one will.

I predict, Mr. Speaker, we'll be talking about this one in the legislature for years and years. This will be one of the examples . . . This will be one of the examples when the Saskatchewan Party is on that side of the legislature that we use as a basis for saying to the people of Saskatchewan, there's one thing you can count on from the people of Saskatchewan, if we're going to invest dollars anywhere, it's going to be here in Saskatchewan and it's not going to be . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And it's not going to be investing into dot-coms in Atlanta, Georgia. We're not going to invest in hare-brained schemes in potatoes. We're not going to blow money on a land titles system.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good one as well — land titles here in Saskatchewan. This government has been thinking about this for a while now, Mr. Speaker. They want to . . . If you buy a piece of property here in Saskatchewan, the process always was, you bought a piece of property, you contacted your lawyer, they transferred the title, you got a piece of paper — whether as a piece of real estate here in Regina or anywhere in Saskatchewan or farmland on Saskatchewan, you got a title back that said you own this piece of property. You flip it over, you see where it was mortgaged at and all of that kind of stuff. It was a system that was old, there's no question about it — bit antiquated, but it worked. It did do one thing — it worked, Mr. Speaker.

So now we got, here in Saskatchewan, a government opposite that decided they wanted to computerize this. It's a little bit like GigaText for land titles. They all remember GigaText over there, Mr. Speaker.

GigaText lost . . . And it was a hare-brained scheme then. It was a hare-brained scheme then; there is no question about that. I think it lost about 5 or \$6 million, Mr. Speaker.

Well how much money has the NDP got in their GigaText program, the land titles ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) program right now? Eighty million and counting, Mr. Speaker. We are told that that program, a computer program of that type, Mr. Speaker, should cost about 1 to \$5 million, in that range, to implement a program of that type. You can buy it off the shelf almost anywhere, Mr. Speaker, we're told as well.

And so now we've got a government that sunk, time after time, millions and millions of dollars. It's at \$80 million and counting. And the only problem with this thing is if it worked, you might have some degree of an argument, even though the costs are about fifteen-fold over what it should have cost.

(12:15)

But we've got a program, Mr. Speaker, that still doesn't even work. I'm told they can't distinguish between people of the same name, so if you've got a Bill Smith that bought a piece of property out in Cabri, Saskatchewan, and you've got a Bill Smith that bought a property up in Tisdale, we haven't been able to figure out how we can distinguish between one or the other.

It just seems bizarre. Again, beyond belief, Mr. Speaker. That's the little hitch, that's the little hitch that there's in the program still at this point.

And typical of the NDP, they're going to figure out what to fix this problem and if it takes tens of millions of dollars to do it, we're going to plough ahead and get her done, Mr. Speaker.

And on top of that they've got some of their people running around the world telling people in other countries around the world, Mr. Speaker, that we've got a program back in Saskatchewan if you want to think about computerizing your land titles program. And I suspect that one of the first questions they say: well that's kind of interesting; how is it working? How is it going so far over there?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess you would have to say, if you were honest, you'd have to say well we've got a few hitches in it right now. We thought it was going to cost a million and a half but it's cost 80 so far and counting. We were . . . just calculated a little bit off there.

And we've also got this little hitch that we can't distinguish two people's names . . . of the same name in this program. So we've got a province where we've got a shrinking number of people, Mr. Speaker, and yet we still can't distinguish between two people of the same name.

You would have thought, Mr. Speaker . . . I have a friend that's in the computer programming business and he tells me that there are certain things that you do right off the start when you're designing a program. You make sure that there are ways of separating people by either their name, their address, their social security number, health care number, driver's licence —

take anything you want — but they've got to figure out some way of distinguishing between two people of the same name.

Apparently that was something the members opposite forgot, Mr. Speaker, and in order to fix that, we got \$80 million invested in this and counting, and somehow or another, Mr. Speaker, this has been a good investment for the people of Saskatchewan. Another NDP investment on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

And then the Premier stands up before the people of Saskatchewan and says it's Osama bin Laden's fault. It's Osama bin Laden's fault that we don't have money for highways; it's Osama bin Laden's fault we don't have money for health care or education or agriculture or highways.

Mr. Speaker, we have money for a dot-com in Atlanta, we have money to invest in a potato corporation that's losing money, we have money for companies in Australia, we have money for almost anything but when it comes to what the real priorities of this government is, they say sorry, it's Osama Bin Laden's fault, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it all be . . . it would all be funny except it's pretty serious when you have a government opposite that unfortunately wants to get into these types of games playing with the finances of our province.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, this government was going around in the legislature and all across Saskatchewan after their budget saying it was a good news budget; we're going to hire more people; we have priorities in terms of investing in Saskatchewan; and a whole bunch of things of that nature, Mr. Speaker. They were going to hire more people, 570 people.

So what did they do in this budget, Mr. Speaker? Those 570 people that they said were so essential to the operations of Saskatchewan, so necessary, so incredibly important to the operations of government, they said to about half of those people yesterday, we don't need you any longer.

So once again these people that come to the legislature with this higher calling are playing with people's lives once again. They're saying to them, you've served our NDP purpose for long enough — now you have to go, now you no longer have a job. And the people of Saskatchewan are asked once again to just suck it up and take it, Mr. Speaker.

Well I can tell you, I think that the people of Saskatchewan are getting a little bit tired of all of this. I learned a long time ago in politics, what happens to governments over time is, is they just throw another weight, another brick, into that bag of problems they've got carrying around on their shoulder. And this one's getting pretty heavy to carry, I think, for the members opposite.

When you have things like losses in potatoes; dot-coms in Atlanta, Georgia; when you have things like the Minister of Finance playing jiggery-pokery with the finances of this province; when you have the Minister of Agriculture saying that it's all Ottawa's fault when we don't have agriculture programs, knowing full well that he sits at the table and negotiates, or attempts to negotiate, those programs; when you have all of those things happening in Saskatchewan, I think it's little

wonder that the editorialists are saying that you have only one option left to you, only one option available left to the Premier, and that's to call an election.

The last paragraph of the editorial in today's *StarPhoenix* reads:

Rather than make the tough choices, the government has opted to procrastinate. If it's an election Premier Calvert is buying time for, he should go ahead and call one without delay. Saskatchewan can't afford to carry on this charade . . . (any longer, Mr. Speaker).

Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree with what the editorialists — and I predict in the next number of days we'll see similar ones from papers all across this province — coming forward and saying, you've got one option left, Mr. Premier, and that's to call an election so the people of Saskatchewan can pass judgment on you and the dramatic changes in direction that this government has made, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan . . . And our Finance critic, I think, outlined it really well in his comments yesterday and again this morning with respect to this budget, talked about the \$225 million NDP sham, rainy day fund that they call a rainy day fund. He talked about the changes to the capital, education capital spending, and how that was done by a previous administration that they criticized roundly at the time.

The unprecedented \$300 million transfer from Crown corporations — money they don't have, Mr. Speaker, that they will be going out and borrowing so that they can transfer it to the provincial government — and the \$50 million increase in sales tax.

So some of the things that have been happening in Saskatchewan in the past that they criticized, some of the things that we watched happening in BC that has been criticized by virtually every financial columnist in Canada, these guys are being . . . these people opposite are doing right now, Mr. Speaker.

And it is astounding that the Minister of Finance would want to attach his reputation — and I think he has a pretty good one actually — it's astounding that he would want to attach his reputation to these kinds of things, Mr. Speaker. And it's little wonder — it's little wonder — a couple of days ago in the newspapers we were seeing an NDP insider saying that if the Government of Saskatchewan decided to go for this capital spending type of plans that they have, that it was the height of sleaze.

It'd be interesting to know, Mr. Speaker, who was . . . which minister was the one who leaked that little bit of information out; because I suspect there's quite a few ministers opposite that are having a hard time with this, Mr. Speaker. They're having a very, very hard time with this, Mr. Speaker. And I suspect that they didn't want their name associated with this, Mr. Speaker. And it's no wonder that the NDP insider — and I can only speculate on who that might have been, Mr. Speaker; it might have been a cabinet minister, might have been a past cabinet minister, might have been a past premier for all I know, Mr. Speaker — that said that this would be the height of sleaze if this government got into that type of financing.

But unfortunately for the people of Saskatchewan that's exactly where this government chose to wallow in yesterday's budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to agriculture for a moment, we've seen in the last number of days the Minister of Agriculture desperately trying to convince the farmers of Saskatchewan that the changes in the Crop Insurance Corporation were all the responsibility of the federal government.

I was on my way into Regina when I heard that news, Mr. Speaker, that they're saying that the changes were all a result of the federal government. So I thought to myself, given the minister's track record in terms of being straight with the farmers of Saskatchewan, I thought, maybe we should phone the Minister of Agriculture's office in Ottawa and get their version of events.

So I called the Minister of Agriculture's office in Regina and spoke with his chief of staff. And the chief of staff in Ottawa, in Minister Vanclief's office, said to me, I thought we could expect your call here. Because I doubt it very much that you or the farmers of Saskatchewan would believe this story, this line, hook, line, and sinker, Mr. Speaker.

And they said, well the Minister of Agriculture isn't quite telling the whole story here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They said, here's how the thing works. Here's how it works, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a safety net package that's available for Saskatchewan and other provinces. And there's a certain amount of money that the federal government contributes to that over that period of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's a certain amount of money that they contribute over that period of time.

And so the Minister of Agriculture, last spring, went down to Ottawa and he said to Ottawa, look, we don't have a lot of money. We don't have a lot of money, Mr. Vanclief. The Minister of Agriculture said to him, we don't have a lot of money. But we want the CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) program. We want that program; we think it's a good program.

We don't agree with that. We don't agree with that. They have some real concerns about that program. But the Minister of Agriculture went down to Ottawa and said to the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa, we'd like to see this program be put in place, but we're broke. We don't have any money. We blew her all on potatoes.

But, he said, if you would take \$20 million out of next year's program — year 2002's program — and put it into year 2001's program, if you're willing to do that, we will pay that money . . . start paying that money back to you next year, \$7 million at a time.

So the Minister of Agriculture essentially mortgaged the farmers' future last year and the repayment terms came due this year. And so when the rubber hit the road and the Government of Saskatchewan had to start making those repayments to the federal government for that money, the . . .

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

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan at that point had no choice — they had to start repaying the loan that they took out last year. And so unfortunately, the way they chose to do that was start slashing the program, Mr. Speaker.

And it's not . . . it shouldn't be a debate about who said what was said or anything of that nature. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that that agreement is likely on paper somewhere, probably in the Minister of Agriculture's office. And I dare say that there's a copy likely in Ottawa somewhere. And we're trying to get our hands on that too.

And the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Finance likely has a copy of that agreement as well. And if I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker, if I'm wrong about that, I challenge the government opposite to be straight with the farmers and the people of Saskatchewan and come clean and say that that isn't how the agreement worked. Because if they do, Mr. Speaker, I suspect the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa will be saying that the Minister of Agriculture's pants are fully aflame here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — I suspect as well that the people of Saskatchewan will know exactly what that means when I make reference to that.

The fact of the matter is, is this government last year decided to mortgage the future of Saskatchewan right at a time when we were starting on this cycle of drought, unfortunately, and continues into the cycle of drought this year.

So we've got farmers all across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, farmers all across the province right now getting their crop insurance information. They're planning their seeding operations. We're a few short weeks away from it. It'll be starting up in the Southwest, seeding operations will be starting up in the Southwest of this province. Traditionally, they get going around the 10th to the 15th of April. It might be a little later this year because it's a little cold, but around that time frame. So we're basically two to three, four weeks away from seeding operations beginning here in Saskatchewan.

Farmers are making their decisions, they were waiting their crop insurance information — waiting and waiting and waiting for their crop insurance information. Because it's not just like you can ramp up seeding operations in a few hours. You have to think about what you're going to seed. You have to think about getting some seed in place, first of all. You have to start thinking about treatment, seed treatments, and all of those kinds of things; you have to start thinking about fertilizer and pesticides and herbicides and a whole range of things that you have to have in mind. One of the other things you have to have in mind is how you're going to finance all of these things.

(12:30)

The biggest megaproject in Saskatchewan's history is on an annual basis is going to take place here in the next few days, billions of dollars of resources put into mother earth every year with the hope that they're going to get a return for that. That all

takes some time to ramp up. I don't know whether, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite understand that.

But in farms all across this province, Mr. Speaker, farmers are making those kinds of decisions. So they're a few weeks away from making those decisions. I would dare say many of them haven't even got their crop insurance information but they are anxiously awaiting that information.

And then they have to rush out and start making plans for their seeding operation. Decide whether they're going to buy seed or — which is always a good idea, Mr. Speaker, to consider as an option, but that was facetiously said, Mr. Speaker — but they're making plans in terms of that right now. So they'll be looking at whether they want to buy seed, Mr. Speaker, or they'll be looking at whether they want to clean their own seed, as many, many farmers do in Saskatchewan. That's always a good idea as well. Mr. Speaker, they'll be making those decisions right now.

They'll be looking at financing options and how they're going to manage that. And the banks are anxiously awaiting the decisions about crop insurance as well because quite often, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, quite often in Saskatchewan operating lines of credit are tied to crop insurance contracts that farmers have. It goes hand in hand, Mr. Speaker. You go into the bank and you say to them, I want to borrow a certain amount of money to put my crop in. And one of the security requirements that the bank asks for — there's not all that many options that you have — they'll look at grain inventory as a security feature, they'll look at land as a security feature, and they'll look at a crop insurance contract as security for that operating line of credit.

So in the next few weeks farmers have to not only prepare for seeding operations, they're going to go in and negotiate with their banks for financing. They're going to look at how they're going to manage their operations in terms of . . . logistically manage their operations and this all has to be done within a few days, Mr. Speaker, because that's all the government opposite has allowed them.

And now on top of that, Mr. Speaker, on top of that, as we have found out in the last little while, they've got a big fat surprise in the mail in the last few days. And that's about a 5 to a \$7,000 bill courtesy of the NDP opposite, Mr. Speaker, to finance as well this year.

So they're sitting there thinking to themselves: I've got a drought, I haven't got any seed ready yet, I haven't got credit arrangements ready yet, I haven't got fertilizer and pesticides and herbicides in place yet because I haven't the money to afford that yet. I haven't got any of those things in place yet and then they get the big bill from the NDP opposite, Mr. Speaker.

And farmers all across this province are looking at it right now if they've got their crop insurance information. It's really easy to determine what your costs are, Mr. Speaker. I have the crop insurance information for a farm in the west part of our province. It gives you the coverage options that are available to you; it gives you the premiums. So it's really quite simple.

If you're thinking about seeding 500 acres of wheat here in Saskatchewan, you go down the table. There's what it's going

to cost you for wheat in Saskatchewan now. You make the simple calculation of 500 acres times the premium costs. Here's what it costs me this year. Here's what it cost me last year. And the . . . and unfortunate circumstance that the NDP have handed them in the last few days, it's going to cost them 5 to \$7,000 on an average farm here in Saskatchewan, than it cost last year.

We've got net farm income figures plummeting in Saskatchewan right now — numbers just sliding off the table — and these people just took from the farmers of Saskatchewan another 5 to \$7,000 out of their bottom line. Thank you, thank you very much for your enhanced crop insurance program. That's what the farmers of Saskatchewan are saying. With help like that we need, we need some severe changes in the operations of this government opposite.

That's . . . I can . . . can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, a comparable thing happening anywhere else in Saskatchewan? Could you think for a moment what the people of this province would be saying if all of a sudden the Government of Saskatchewan decided, we're going to jump the insurance rates on your car by 5 to thousand . . . by 5 to \$7,000?

If we decided that we're going to increase insurance premiums on houses by 5 to \$7,000; if we were going to increase . . . if we're going to increase property taxes on an urban, an urban householder here in Regina or in Saskatoon, in the member opposite's constituency by 5 to \$7,000 — what do you think they would be saying, Mr. Speaker? They would be saying the same thing that the farmers of this province are saying right now. What possibly, what possibly prompts the government opposite to hoist those kinds of . . .

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

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, those are the kinds of things that unfortunately this government has hoisted onto the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and the farmers of this province, the farmers of this province. It would be interesting to know what the cabinet . . . it would be interesting to know what the cabinet discussion was when they decided to make these changes. It would be interesting . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order please. I ask the members to come to order.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, and we have to wonder on top of that . . . last year this government brought in their Rural Revitalization program. And that was going to be the program that, I think the advertising said something like: we're going to take a look at government policies through a rural lens, Mr. Speaker; we're going to have a department that every piece of legislation, every change and anything that the Government of Saskatchewan does, we're going to look at it through a rural lens; we're going to take a really good look at it and see what kind of an impact, what kind of an impact it has on the people of rural Saskatchewan.

Well I wonder if that department is working at that right now, Mr. Speaker, or whether they had any kind of impact into the decisions prior to the decisions being made.

A couple of days ago in the newspaper we had the deputy

minister of the Rural Revitalization program saying that the program was working really well. I suppose if you're employed there it's working really well. I can't see any other part of it that's working really well for the people of Saskatchewan.

It's almost like they put a magnifying glass on it and said, here's where we can burn a few people, Mr. Speaker, with that rural lens, rather than help them with that rural lens, Mr. Speaker.

And the people of this province are beginning, I think, to understand that this NDP government opposite, Mr. Speaker, is playing just a little bit disingenuous with people when they say they are trying to help them, Mr. Speaker — when they're saying that they want to help the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — because that, Mr. Speaker, that, Mr. Speaker, is the type of thing that unfortunately we are faced with in Saskatchewan right now.

A province, Mr. Speaker, that has some challenges. There's no doubts about it — no doubt about it. We have challenges in this province. We have a loss of population in Saskatchewan. We have a province that's losing population, hasn't gained in population in 50 or 60 or 70 years, and the government opposite said, it's not our fault.

We have a province in Saskatchewan that just simply is not growing in terms of our economy. We've lost . . . in terms of business taxes here in Saskatchewan, we've seen it absolutely knifed in half in terms of revenue for the Government of Saskatchewan — an economy that isn't growing.

We have a government opposite, Mr. Speaker, that seems to think that there is nothing we can do about those things.

Well I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there are some things that can be done about it. The official opposition and the Leader of the Official Opposition has a plan to make changes here in Saskatchewan.

We have a plan that will grow the province of Saskatchewan by 100,000 people. We have a plan . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — . . . we have a plan to keep our young people here. We have a plan to grow our economy in Saskatchewan; we have a plan for investment and opportunity here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We have a plan that will create hope and dreams for the people of our province, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan that will rebuild our highways in Saskatchewan, that will put in place an agriculture safety net for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

We have a plan that will deal with the health care crisis that we have ongoing in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan, we have a plan that'll deal with education in Saskatchewan, that will provide hopes and dreams for our young people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We have a plan that'll stop, we have a plan that'll stop the looney-tunes investment of the government opposite, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan that we'll put before the people of Saskatchewan that'll say to them, we want opportunity; we want to have dreams realized here in our province; we want to have our young people stay in this province.

We want to say to the young people that are watching today all across this province, that we want you to stay in Saskatchewan; we don't want to have to go and visit you in Alberta; we don't want to have to go and visit you in British Columbia or anywhere else, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We have a plan that when we go to Alberta and say to the people in Alberta, we want to repatriate you back to Saskatchewan, we want to provide an opportunity for you to take the . . . we want to take your wealth and your experience and your education and bring you back to our province to invest here in Saskatchewan. That's what we are saying to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We have a government opposite, we have a government opposite that simply says, we have to wallow in doom and gloom. We have to simply . . . we cannot have investment opportunity here in Saskatchewan without Crown corporations doing it for us.

We have a government opposite that demonstrated yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that they have no plan, never have had a plan, and any plans that they have for Saskatchewan are destructive to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, their way of mollifying Saskatchewan last summer was they were going to drive around the province in a bus, they were going to drive around the province in the bus, make this whistle stop tour of Saskatchewan and somehow or another that was going to convince the people of Saskatchewan that you were going to do the right things.

You were going to . . . the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, went around this province and said to the farmers of Saskatchewan, you can expect to have an enhanced crop insurance program — and we got a, we've got a slash program; you can expect to have highways that are good — and we've got highways all over this province that are in deplorable conditions; you can expect to have more money available for education — instead of that they cut education programs; we're going to have shorter waiting lists for people in health care — and yet we have longer and expanding waiting lists here in Saskatchewan; they were going to say that we're going to have better water conditions, better water for the people of Saskatchewan — and they slashed the budget for the testing program for water here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's little wonder that here in Saskatchewan the people of this province have lost confidence in this government opposite, have lost confidence in the Premier — the Premier that has no mandate to do the changes that he's doing here in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, if there's anything that the people of this province understand it's when they see a tired government opposite and the need for a change, Mr. Speaker. And if there's anything that we are hearing more and more all over Saskatchewan, they are saying to us, we need a change here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, there are many members that over the course of the next few days will be making comments about the budget. We'll be making comments about our budget here in Saskatchewan, we'll be making on a critic-specific basis. We have many concerns about this government's budget, Mr. Speaker — many, many thoughts and criticisms about it.

We have some criticisms but we also have some things that we will want to talk about further with respect to our plan for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition will be making comments, and all of the members opposite, the members on this side of the House, will be making comments about their critic responsibilities.

But in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of this province have universally turned a thumbs-down on this budget, Mr. Speaker. I think they've looked at this; they don't like what they see — whether they are a farmer in Leader, Saskatchewan, or a business person in Melfort, or a homeowner in Regina, or a union worker here in the city of Regina or anywhere else in this province. I think the people of this province have universally given this budget two thumbs down, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's incumbent upon this government, if they have any degree of moral authority left, if they have any moral ground left, Mr. Speaker, they should do the right thing. They should do the right thing for the people of Saskatchewan and offer the people of Saskatchewan the opportunity once and for all to decide whether they want the Premier and the members opposite still in charge of this province. They should do the honourable thing, Mr. Speaker;, they should call an election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(12:45)

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are many members that want to enter the debate over the next number of days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move at this time we adjourn debate on this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, along with wishing all hon. members of the House a very peaceful weekend and hopefully in celebration as they see appropriate with families and friends, it is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: — Before we ask for adjournment, I would recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Hermanson: — Leave to speak.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hermanson: — I thank my colleagues for leave. I too, on behalf of the official opposition and all members in the House, would like to wish everyone a very happy Easter, a good holiday weekend as we have time with family, those close to us, and our constituencies. I just wish you all the best of this blessed holiday season.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Assembly adjourned at 12:47.