

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present again today regarding the children who are exploited through the sex trade.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately implement all 49 recommendations of the final report as submitted by the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people who have signed this petition are from Naicam and Englefeld.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the tobacco legislation. 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.

Signatures on this petition today, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Crooked River, Prairie River, Tisdale, Bjorkdale, Star City, and Yellowquill.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of constituents to do with the overfishing at Lake of the Prairies. 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 signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Yarbo, Churchbridge, and Esterhazy and Bredenbury, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan regarding the condition of our highways. And the 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 No. 35 in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency in order to prevent injuries and loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Sedley, Radville, Weyburn, and Odessa area.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are concerned about the changes to crop insurance. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

And the petition is signed by residents of Bengough and Viceroy.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of people from Swift Current and area concerned about the tobacco control legislation in the province. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners, they are from city of Swift Current and the community of Success.

I so present.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Carrot River Valley who are concerned about certain inadequacies in the tobacco legislation. 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.

As is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed entirely by the good citizens of Carrot River, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with a petition, citizens opposed to possible reductions of services to the Davidson and Craik health centres.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson and Craik health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available as well as laboratory, public health, home care, long-term care services available to users from the Craik and Davidson area and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Davidson.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today regarding the legislation for tobacco. 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 Shell Lake.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been received and are tabled as addendums to previously tabled petitions, being sessional papers 7, 8, 11, and 16.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall, on Thursday next, move first reading of The Government Accountability Act.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of a written question:

To the minister responsible for Corrections and Public

Safety: in the past year, what is the total number of women who have died while undergoing treatment in the methadone program at Pine Grove Correctional Centre in Prince Albert; how many days or months were allowed to escape between the time Corrections officials told of a possible drug trade in Pine Grove, and of actions taken by the Justice department to address this; why was the information regarding a possible drug trade included in pre-sentence report, but withheld from officials; and why didn't Pine Grove report concerns of possible methadone abuse to Corrections officials?

And while I'm on my feet, I'll like to present another written question:

To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization: as of April 2, 2002, who is employed in the office of Rural Revitalization, and what are their titles and duties; and what is the budget for the office of Rural Revitalization in the 2002-2003 fiscal year?

Thank you.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Environment: of the 10 municipal inspectors that will be hired by your department this fiscal year: (a) what is the anticipated start date of these inspectors; (b) in which community will each of the 10 be based; (c) which regions of the province will each inspector be responsible for; (d) what is the nature and scope of their job duties, and does this include water testing; (e) has your department made certification mandatory for all 10 of these positions, and if not, why not?

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I have a second question for the Minister of Environment and Resource Management as well. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

Which communities reported discharges of raw sewage into water bodies to SERM as required by provincial regulation on the following dates in 2001: May 30, June 20, July 4, July 16, July 22, and July 25. In each case, which water body was affected?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming: of the updated VLTs that supposedly identify problem gamblers and are due to replace existing VLTs this fall, how many different styles did the government consider for use; what was the price of each brand; which style was chosen for use in the replacement program and on what basis was it chosen; what is the anticipated total cost to replace Saskatchewan's current network of VLTs with the new models; and who will bear the cost of the replacement program?

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: what are the names of any and all reports conducted for the Department of Labour and/or the Workers' Compensation Board dealing with some aspect of the operations of the WCB; how much did each report cost the government and/or the WCB; and will you provide a copy of each of these reports for the years 2000, 2001, and 2002?

Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Warriors Defeat Pats

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Moose Jaw North and I are quite accustomed to jokes about the name of our fair city. But we endure them, Mr. Speaker, knowing Moose Jaw is a thriving community. We even take them with a bit of perverse pride as only a community with a rock-solid sense of self and a very colourful history second to none could do. And in the words of the Easter hymn, there is much to "laud and honour" in our city.

As of Sunday night, Mr. Speaker, there's something else. And at the risk of further damaging the bruised egos of my good friends and colleagues from the Queen City, I'm happy to announce that the Moose Jaw Warriors have advanced to the second round of the Eastern Conference Championship in the Western Canadian Hockey League.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Now who did they trounce . . . Oh, pardon me, Mr. Speaker. Who did they defeat in the first round? The favourites of course. The Moose Jaw Warriors are quite comfortable in the underdog role. Obviously more comfortable than the Regina Pats as favourites. Four games to two, Mr. Speaker, was the end result.

The Warriors are a community-owned team. Coach Curtis Hunt and his team played their hearts out for Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, Regina and Moose Jaw have a very healthy rivalry that is well-known. I'd like to congratulate the Pats on a very excellent season and I'd like to congratulate the Warriors on a great first series and I know all members wish them well as they move up the ladder. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Bruno Junior Axemen Win Gold Medal

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of pride that I stand today to congratulate the Bruno Junior Axemen broomball team on their spectacular performance in capturing the gold medal in the National Broomball Championships held March 27 to 30 in Oak Bluff, Manitoba. The round robin playoffs netted the Bruno Junior

Axemen five wins and only one loss.

Bruno advanced to the final after defeating the Windsor Riot team from Ontario in the semi-finals. The final game was played against College Laval from Quebec and was indeed a heart-stopping, energy-charged game with Bruno Junior Axemen winning by a score of two to one — the winning goal reaching its mark with only 34.7 seconds remaining in the game.

The two goals in the finals were scored by Jeff Basset of Bruno and Trevor Volt of Odessa. In addition, 18-year-old Jeff Basset was voted the most valuable player of the tournament by the Canadian Broomball Federation. In essence, he is the most accomplished junior broomball player in Canada.

Jeff Basset and Cameron Weiman of Bruno were also selected as wingers on the first all-star team, and Chris Lepage of Bruno was selected for the second all-star team defence.

A hearty congratulations to all Bruno Junior Axemen team players on this most noteworthy accomplishment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Ringette Championships

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More good news for Saskatchewan and Regina.

Yesterday I was happy to be at the opening ceremonies to welcome to Regina all those associated with the 24th Annual Canadian Ringette Championships — that's 500 athletes, coaches, and officials from 26 teams across Canada plus the 1,500 parents and guests who are here with them.

The host committee consists of representatives from Ringette Regina and Ringette Saskatchewan, co-chaired by Fred Pollock and Keith Doering. At the onset, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate those organizations for bringing this important event to Saskatchewan.

And I want to point out to the members that 250 volunteers are involved to ensure its success. Another example of the spirit that defines our province.

The games will take place this week at several rinks in Regina and in Balgonie. As well, there will be several activities during the week. This event will provide a good economic boost to our community of about \$1 million, Mr. Speaker.

The young ringette player who spoke for her sport at the opening ceremony stated her pride in her province and her city as well as her pleasure in welcoming so many other Canadians to see for themselves our great province. She and all her Saskatchewan teammates are worthy ambassadors for us, and I join them in welcoming all ringette players, fans, and parents to Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Eston Panthers Win Midget A Provincial Championship

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Eston Panthers were in Weyburn and defeated the Weyburn Pan Canadian Drillers to win the female Midget A provincial championships in hockey. The Eston Panthers, Mr. Speaker, have provided for our community exciting hockey and provide a strong leadership example for the younger girls in the area playing hockey.

Some of the members of the midget team also earlier this year, just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, were on the bantam provincial championship team as well. And I understand that many of the young ladies on this championship team will be going on to continue playing hockey at the university or US (United States) college level.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the legislature, especially the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy, to join with me in congratulating the Midget A Eston Panther ladies hockey team on winning the provincial championship.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Filmpool is marking its 25th anniversary.

The Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative is a non-profit, artist-run centre which supports, encourages, and assists independent visionary filmmaking in Saskatchewan. The idea 25 years ago — and today — Mr. Speaker, is to pool expensive cameras and editing gear and to promote artistic collaboration in making films.

The Filmpool is committed to developing an awareness and appreciation of independent film which reflects the individual and collective cultural expression of Saskatchewan people.

Please join me in congratulating the Filmpool on its dedication and success in promoting the Saskatchewan film industry and promoting a co-operative and collegial approach to this industry and art form.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wartime Mission to Afghanistan

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Brendon Warwaruk joined the Canadian Navy 11 years ago and after the equivalent of five years of sea-time experience, he is ready for his first wartime mission to Afghanistan.

As a naval communicator, 31-year-old Brendon will be travelling along with his crew of 260 people for at least a month until they reach the waters they will be protecting alongside the Americans.

Brendon said he has been told rumours that they will be passing through mines in the water, as well as the ship will be facing

another level of endangerment as they encounter refugees and other vessels along the way.

Brendon is the son of the Mayor Peter and his wife Anita Warwaruk of Unity, Saskatchewan. Might all members of this legislature pray for Brendon's safety during his time in Afghanistan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Air Security Fee

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, as members are aware, the federal government has implemented a \$24 air security fee on most domestic and trans-ocean air flights. The federal government also implemented a \$12 fee for cross-border flights. Both these effective April 1, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, we have serious concerns about this exorbitant air security fee and its impact on air travel. This air security fee in its present form will be a major disincentive for short-haul travel, both within the province and inter-provincially.

The added cost for a ticket between Regina and Saskatoon, for example, will discourage travel between these points and further aggravate what is already a serious financial crisis for our local carriers.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government's move will have a major impact on Saskatchewan based carriers such as Transwest, Norcanair, as well as WestJet. This could be another tax grab by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, air security and the protection of all Canadians is a national issue and is therefore the responsibility of the federal government. Cost of airfare should not be effectively offloaded to air passengers. We are talking to industry organizations such as airlines, airport authorities, tourism, and the chamber of commerce, which has also raised over the size of the fee, its implementation, and impact.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the federal government to reconsider the air security fee, and I suggest the member from North Battleford and his leader speak to their federal colleagues. It is an urgent matter to the travelling community and the Saskatchewan local airline carriers.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on this important issue today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prominent Citizen of Estevan Dies

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The city of Estevan said goodbye to one of its most dedicated and colourful citizens last week. Glenn Peterson, owner of Glen Peterson Construction and Redimix, passed away on March 23 at the age of 84 years.

In 1938, Mr. Peterson, grabbed a shovel, purchased a nine-year

old truck and went to work. And, Mr. Speaker, he never stopped working until the week of his passing.

Mr. Peterson's business grew to include a payroll of over 30 people and over 50 units of equipment. Mr. Peterson was a very generous supporter of the community, making significant donations towards the construction of St. Joseph's Hospital in 1990.

Last Thursday, Mr. Peterson's funeral was held in the Trinity Lutheran Church in Estevan. This church was built using concrete that Mr. Peterson donated.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in paying tribute to the memory of Glenn Peterson. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Accounting Practices

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April of 1995, former Finance minister, Janice MacKinnon introduced balanced budget legislation in this House. Ms. MacKinnon made the following statement about this legislation.

. . . this legislation contains . . . distinctive provisions which will help protect the public against any future irresponsible government.

. . . the Act will prevent the government from manipulating accounting practices in order to meet the balance requirement. Provincial governments should not be allowed to meet the requirement to balance by simply changing its accounting practices and thus taking certain expenses off budget. Such practices will be prohibited.

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this government has done by changing the way it accounts for capital expenditures. Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP (New Democratic Party) breaking its balanced budget legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to answer on behalf of the Finance minister today to say that, you know, last year we stood in this House and the opposition talked about the fact that we were sitting on a secret pot of money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

The member opposite who raises the question says he wanted a fall session of the legislature to debate how to spend the money. And then the Saskatchewan Party called upon the Minister of Finance to confirm if he was sitting on a secret bundle of cash and, if so, recall the legislature so it could be debated how to spend this windfall.

Now it doesn't matter what we do. If we're prudent and we set the money aside, it's a secret bundle — but even though it's secret they know about it and they want to spend it. If we decide that we are going to make sure that young people have the education facilities they need, the universities they need,

and that we think it's important to leverage that money so that they can build those institutions, I ask the members opposite, do they not agree with that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Premier to answer the following question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to repeat what Janice MacKinnon said in this House on April 28, 1995:

Provincial governments should not be allowed to meet the requirement to balance by simply changing its accounting practices and thus taking certain expenses off budget. Such practices will be prohibited.

Mr. Speaker, by the minister's own admission this government has changed the way it accounts for \$90 million worth of capital expenditures. That's an accounting change. And Janice MacKinnon said her Balanced Budget Act prevents a government from changing accounting practices mid-term in order to hide a deficit.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP violating their own Balanced Budget Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — . . . I have to say that if the members would turn to page 55 of their budget document, it clearly outlines the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation and the government's total contribution to that. The fact that that enables communities to do more than they would be able to do is not a matter of hiding anything or changing accounting practices. It is clearly reflected in the budget, the \$85 million that is part of that fund.

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, you know, these same people question the revenue estimates. They say that we're lowballing oil and gas. But how did oil and gas turn out, Mr. Speaker?

The budget forecast for oil based on West Texas Intermediate was 25.50; the calendar year price 25.86 — a margin of error of under 2 per cent. Now the times that I've ever heard any projections from the members opposite, any time you can come that close then maybe you'll be ready to govern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, Janice MacKinnon also talked about governments that try to hide a deficit by taking huge dividends from the Crowns. She said, and I quote:

You can't, for example, take big dividends from the Crowns, force the Crowns to borrow more, because your debt will go up.

Mr. Speaker, you can't take huge dividends from the Crowns as it forces the Crowns to incur more debt. That's what Janice MacKinnon said back in 1995. And it's exactly what the NDP is doing today.

Mr. Speaker, this appears to be another violation of The

Balanced Budget Act. Why is the NDP violating its very own balanced budget law by hiding debt in the Crowns?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, we believe that the Crowns are an important social and financial and service tool for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The fact of the matter is that they have helped over and over again in Saskatchewan. They've cross-subsidized telephone rates, power rates, energy rates. They have put money into the General Revenue Fund year after year to help support health care, education. Instead of that money going into private shareholders' pockets, it has gone into the public pocket of Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, that's the right thing to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to the NDP's own budget documents, the NDP took a \$200 million dividend from the Crowns last year. During that same period, according to the budget documents, Crown corporation debt increased by \$143 million.

Mr. Speaker, Janice MacKinnon said under her Balanced Budget Act, you can't take big dividends from the Crowns and force the Crowns to borrow more. But that's exactly what the NDP did last year, and, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what they plan on doing this year.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP violating The Balanced Budget Act as outlined by Janice MacKinnon back in 1995?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the members' opposite conversion to Janice MacKinnon's principles of finance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — He certainly wasn't as enamoured of them when that member was with us in the House.

But I have to say . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The minister will continue.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that the Crowns play a very legitimate role in helping to support the services that are provided in Saskatchewan, both their core services as well as the other services to Saskatchewan people. These Crowns today have a healthier debt/equity ratio than they had at any time when the members opposite were in government and their pals. And it's very responsible that these Crowns return revenues to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's ironic how this government has treated legislation

of the past. We saw what they did with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts and that legislation. But, you know, now . . . now they don't even have regards for their own legislation, their own balanced budget legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, no one, no one is falling for the NDP's fudge-it budget. The numbers don't add up. And now it appears they may be violating their own Balanced Budget Act.

Janice MacKinnon said, you can't change accounting practices. They changed accounting practices. Janice MacKinnon said, you can't hide debt in the Crowns. They are hiding debt in the Crowns.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, Janice MacKinnon had one more thing to say about any future governments that tried to pull these kind of stunts. She said, and I quote:

. . . a government trying to manipulate is going to be caught, and the electorate is going to be alerted and the electorate is going to do what they should do, which is fire that government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Why is that . . . Governments that cook the books get fired.

(14:00)

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Members, I want to bring the member to order. Last week I warned the members about use of language. I want to define more specifically, more specifically to members the reason for it.

A definition of cooking the books — may I refer to the members — according to *Oxford* is to “falsify . . . ; (to) alter to produce a desired result.” Use of the word cooking, then, is equivalent to use of the word falsification. So I ask the member to withdraw the statement please, before we proceed with the answer.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll withdraw that comment and I'll rephrase it by asking the minister this question . . .

The Speaker: — Order. It's not necessary to equivocate. I accept your answer. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — . . . Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, the member should relax because last week the member from Canora-Pelly was getting all worked up about sales tax and potash revenue forecasts.

Now he made all kinds of wild claims about our unrealistic forecasts. And so what happened, Mr. Speaker? Journalists followed up on this accusation. And what was the headline in *The Leader-Post*? “Potash tax, PST revenue not inflated.”

So what does that say, Mr. Speaker? The potash industry anticipates higher royalties; independent forecasters see an

increase in retail sales.

So, Mr. Speaker, the member should just relax and they should listen to what the Scotiabank Group says this March 2002:

Saskatchewan has been a leader among the provinces in debt reduction . . . The steady gains in fiscal flexibility have allowed the province to proceed with tax cuts and new spending initiatives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, one more question. My question is this, Mr. Speaker: why is this government using questionable accounting practices to hide deficit and debt?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, they have questioned the Fiscal Stabilization Fund even though last year they wanted to spend it. They have questioned the projections even though outside analysts support them. They have questioned our management of the economy even though we grew faster as a percentage of GDP (gross domestic product) than any other economy in Canada for eight years. They've questioned our financial management even though our credit rating went up in every single one of those years.

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that they are not credible on any of the subjects of how budgets are either constructed or interpreted, and I refer them to the Scotiabank which says:

Saskatchewan has been a leader among the provinces in debt reduction. The steady gains and fiscal flexibility have allowed the province to proceed with tax cuts and new spending.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that a good budget matches fiscal capacity to public needs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North Battleford Water Inquiry Report

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management. Last week the government received the report from the North Battleford Water Inquiry. The minister said she would release the report immediately. She said, and I quote:

It is a public document and the public will see it as soon as it's presented to the government. We have nothing to hide here.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister make good on that commitment and release the North Battleford Water Inquiry report today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the Assembly that this government takes her role very seriously when it comes to Sask Water. There's no question, Mr.

Speaker, that we called the inquiry because our Premier wanted to show leadership. He wanted to show leadership now, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, as we've mentioned, the report is in government's hands; we are looking at the report and what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker, is this Friday we're going to North Battleford. We're going to present the report and the government's response to meeting some of the water challenges in this province — this Friday again, Mr. Speaker, in North Battleford.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Mr. Speaker, you really have to wonder who's running the show over there. We have the old minister answering for the new minister. The minister said she would release the . . .

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

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Mr. Speaker, the minister said she would release the North Battleford water report as soon as she received it. She received it last week but then she was abruptly overruled by other government officials. Who's in charge?

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have serious concerns about the safety of their water supply. These concerns extend far beyond North Battleford. Nearly four dozen boil-water advisories affecting over 5,000 Saskatchewan residents are still in effect.

Will the minister make good on her promise to release this report today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, once again, this government believes that the first people that we should be sitting down with is the people of North Battleford, Mr. Speaker. We're going to work with them because this is a very serious matter. And we got the document last Thursday, Mr. Speaker. We're going to look at the document and we're going to go to North Battleford this Friday and we're going to present that information at the public . . . in the public to make sure that the people of North Battleford hear first-hand what some of the challenges were, and what the response of this government's going to be, Mr. Speaker.

So I would ask that member to be patient. Certainly the document is coming, and we will make it public this Friday in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are serious water safety problems in this province but the new minister's actions don't exactly inspire confidence.

First she says she has 10 new positions in her department to deal with water quality. But then she admits that she has no idea what these jobs are going to be. Then she says she has money in her budget, but she doesn't know what the money's for, or

where it is. Then she says she will release the North Battleford inquiry report right away, and now we have the old minister saying they won't do it right away. With leadership like that, some of these communities are going to be boiling water for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, what specific actions is this government taking to assist 44 communities in this province that are still under a boil-water advisory? Will the real minister please stand up?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, once again I'll remind the member that we are now going to release the document in North Battleford on Friday. And I invite the member to come and listen to what the document says, and certainly come and listen to what this government is going to do, Mr. Speaker.

What we're not going to do, Mr. Speaker, is play politics, Mr. Speaker. The first thing that we've done, is our Premier called the inquiry right now. He wanted to find out what went wrong and how we can stop this from occurring again, Mr. Speaker.

He has done that, Mr. Speaker, and this Friday, once again for that member's information, we will be making public our response to the report from Commissioner Laing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is the communities have been hearing these excuses from the NDP for years yet nothing ever gets done. And we know that better than anyone else after that cabinet decision item was leaked to the opposition last session, Mr. Speaker.

Now the NDP has had a \$2 million inquiry but they still have no plan and no money to deal with the recommendations. Mr. Speaker, what's the point of holding a \$2 million inquiry if you have no money budgeted to fix the problems at North Battleford, and the dozens of other Saskatchewan communities?

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please tell us what concrete action is the government taking today to fix the serious water problems in dozens of Saskatchewan communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, this government over the last two years has made significant strides in meeting some of the water challenges. And we've always maintained, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to work in concert with the First Nations government, with the federal government, and local government to try and meet some of those demands, Mr. Speaker. It is not going to be an overnight solution.

But the \$2 million that we spent on the inquiry, Mr. Speaker, the people of North Battleford wanted the inquiry, the government wanted the inquiry, everybody in the province wanted the inquiry because we wanted to know what went wrong and what we can do to fix the problem. The only people that didn't want the inquiry, Mr. Speaker, is the opposition and the member from North Battleford.

So what we're trying to do here is get to the bottom of what went wrong and, again I state, this Friday he will find out what the government response is going to be.

And talking about working together, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a quote from the *Nipawin Journal*, from his hometown of Carrot River, Mr. Speaker, and they say, quote:

Council agreed, it was good to work with SERM and Public Health.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Increase in Long-Term Care Fees

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. Over the long weekend, Mr. Speaker, I received several calls from elderly constituents. They were very concerned about the increase in long-term care home fees as a result of the NDP's fudge-it budget. Elderly people whose spouses are in long-term care homes are struggling to understand why they are being hit with an enormous fee increase for the people they love.

The NDP are selling this fee hike as though they were the . . . as though only the very rich people would pay. But in reality, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how high your income is, if you make over \$994 a month, your long-term care fees took a huge jump of 40 per cent. For people with fixed incomes, any increase is a concern, but 40 per cent is very hard to handle.

Mr. Speaker, what is the NDP's rationale for charging elderly people on fixed incomes who need long-term care such a huge increase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the long-term care fees have gone up as part of this particular budget, but only as it relates to certain people within that system. We have about 9,000 people who are part of the long-term care program in the province and, at the present time, we pay a large amount of that money that goes into that system.

What happens is the people who are earning . . . or who are at the bottom third don't pay any increase at all. So there's 28 . . . there's about 3,000 of them that don't pay any increase at all. There's another group of people that pay a higher amount based on their particular income.

There's a cap of \$3,875, and there are 120 people that pay that. To pay the highest amount, you would have to have over \$50,000 in income. To earn that kind of income, you'd have to have \$1 million in the bank or some other sort of wealth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, under the new fee structure, under the new fee structure the NDP government will be taking \$828 a month, plus 90 per cent of a long-term care resident's income that's over \$828 a month. Saskatchewan Health says the minimum disposable income that a person will be left with is \$166. For some people, prescription drugs alone will take care

of that money.

One constituent of mine currently pays the maximum fee for his wife in long-term care. In addition he pays to the home for disposables, \$250 a month for prescription drugs, and the total of that is \$22,800 a year. And many, if not most, home cares charge an additional \$75 a month for disposable items.

Under the new fee structure, Mr. Speaker, my constituent will now pay over \$50,000 a year for his wife's care. Mr. Speaker, these people worked hard all their lives and paid taxes . . .

The Speaker: — Will the member go directly to the question.

Ms. Draude: — Why is the NDP betraying these people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this government, even after this change, will pay 75 per cent of all of the costs for the long-term care people in the system. Now what does happen is the people who have more income will pay a greater share. Those people on the lower income will . . . won't pay anything more than what they are now.

What they . . . and what we do have is a system that is income-tested. And what we are doing . . . It's income-tested and I would note it's not asset-tested. So there are people who have a large number of assets, who have a low income. They still will receive the particular subsidy. So what we are trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is deal with some of the challenges . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, our plan as it relates to the long-term care fees is to make sure that those people who don't have sufficient income will have their care covered. Those people who have income available, they will pay a greater portion of what their fees cost.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the minister, the minister should tell that to another one of my constituents, Mrs. Iris Ziola. She's concerned about long-term care fee increases because after she pays for her husband's care, disposables, and prescription drugs, she'd be left with \$273 a month to live on.

She's healthy and she has her own home to look after and she has expenses to look after. The NDP government is forcing elderly couples to look at legal means to separate their lives and their assets just to be able to live out their golden years.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP claim to uphold the principles of a publicly funded health care system, yet the very people who paid into that system all their lives and have to rely on that system for survival are being forced to pay even more right now to sustain it.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to Mrs. Ziola how this complies with the principles of publicly funded health care?

How is this not two-tiered health? And at the very least, how is this not user fees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, these new fees come into place October 1 of this year, so we have a number of months to work with people around these particular issues. The issue that the member raises here is an issue that's been part of the system for a long time.

And what happens is when people are involuntarily separated or when they end up having one of the partners going into the particular facility, there are procedures around how to deal with that and their income. These are procedures that have been in place for many years. And if the member would ask those specific questions or have her constituent raise those questions, I'd be happy to deal with them.

What I do not appreciate, and what I know that the people of Saskatchewan do not appreciate, is that the negative people across the way will create fearmongering around these kind of issues for seniors because we do not want our seniors in this province to in any way feel that they're being not cared for and not helped.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, by tradition and by rule of this House set down by the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures in 1975 — a committee made up mainly of NDP members and Liberals — the rules and tradition of this House are that there are no points of orders by members or rulings by the Speaker during question period, which disrupts question period.

Mr. Speaker, is that rule and tradition still in place, or has those rules now been changed?

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, to respond to the point of order.

The Speaker: — What is your response?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, in response to the point of order, there is a long-standing tradition, not only in this House but across the Commonwealth, quite frankly, that prohibits hon. members from challenging the ruling of the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's . . . I believe when I listened carefully to what the hon. member opposite just said, he stood in his place to in fact challenge a ruling of the Speaker, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest it be appropriate to rule him out of order.

The Speaker: — I thank the . . . Order. Order. Order. I thank the member for Cannington for raising the point of order and I thank the member for Moose Jaw North. I will consider the matter and I will bring back a ruling in due time.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day and by leave of the Assembly I would like to make a statement regarding the Queen Mother.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked . . . has requested leave to make a statement regarding the Queen Mother. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, our deep condolences at the passing of Queen Elizabeth, our Queen Mother.

She was indeed a symbol of warmth, grace, and dignity befitting the most beloved member of the royal family. Her life spanned more than a century and she was at the centre of many of the defining moments of her and our time.

Canada and Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, held a special place in her memory. The Queen Mother came to Saskatchewan twice — the first time in 1939 with her husband, George VI. That was their first visit ever to Canada.

Mr. Speaker, when people come to this magnificent Legislative Assembly building, they can view a record of that first visit which is carved in the stonework at the doorway to the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, many of our people in this province well remember the spring of 1939. Saskatchewan had just emerged from the Great Depression; there was no national highway system, no interprovincial air travel. It was a time before television.

Queen Elizabeth and King George VI visited Saskatchewan in June of that year. They made stops across the province including in Regina, Moose Jaw, and Saskatoon. And many will still remember that specially built, silver and blue royal train as it crossed the Prairies. Large crowds greeted them wherever they went, including if I may say, Mr. Speaker, my mother and her schoolmates from the town of Aylesbury. I've often heard the story of their trip to the capital city to see Elizabeth and George.

Two months later the royal couple had returned to England at the advent of World War II. During the Blitz of London and the bombing of Buckingham Palace, the Queen Mother and her husband refused to leave. It was a symbol that rallied the people of Britain and of the Commonwealth throughout the war years. The Queen Mother and her family stood with the Commonwealth during that terrible time.

And since the end of that war she has continued to inspire us as a symbol of stability and humanity in what is a constantly

changing world. The people of Saskatchewan and people around the world today stand with her memory.

The feelings of Saskatchewan people have only deepened toward the Queen Mother over the years. Her second visit to Saskatchewan was with her daughter, Queen Elizabeth II, in 1985. And it was during that visit to Canada and Saskatchewan that the Queen Mother remarked, quote: "to be here is to be among true and lasting friends." We were privileged to be called friend and honoured to be part of her legacy.

And so today, Mr. Speaker, we remember both with sorrow and with thanks one of our favourite grandmothers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Leave to respond to the Premier's words.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's my honour to join with the Premier and stand today to remember the Queen Mother, truly one of the Commonwealth's most beloved figures; a woman who will forever be remembered for her warmth, her charm, her grace, and her dignity.

In more than the 100 years that she lived, the Queen Mother witnessed many notable, notable events. And I'm sure that some would think that all royalty live in a surreal world void of trouble and hardships. But some of the very difficult events that she lived through were the bombing of Buckingham Palace during World War II and the loss of her beloved husband in 1952.

Other events were cause for great joy and celebration. Events such as the coronations of her husband and daughter and the births of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Of course it goes without saying that there are many, many events in the Queen Mother's life that are simply too numerous to mention here, but one thing is certain: they were all made that much more special because she was there.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are many who will agree with me when I say that nowhere was the Queen Mother more loved or more revered than right here in Canada. In Saskatchewan, she will always hold a special place in our hearts.

Who can forget her journeys across the Atlantic to see us. First, as the Premier mentioned, in 1939 as a young queen with her dashing King by her side, while a country that was preparing for war stood on guard. A special 12-car train painted blue and gold carried the royal couple from the East Coast to the West Coast. And her stop here in Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible) . . . was in Regina and other communities where she was met by thousands of admirers.

Then again in 1985, this time with her daughter, Queen Elizabeth II. It was clear that nearly 50 years later, time had not dimmed that incredible spirit or fierce determination to live life to its fullest.

Indeed as time passed, neither age nor illness could keep her

from performing her duties, a fact that endeared her not only to her fellow countrymen but earned the respect and recognition of leaders around the world.

Dignified, graceful, charming and spirited, the Queen Mother was a great monarch, a grand lady, a wonderful person, and one of the world's best. It so suits her personality to be appropriately referred to as the Queen Mum. She will be sadly missed and fondly remembered by those of us in Saskatchewan and by all Canadians as well.

I ask all members to join with us in honouring the Queen Mother in saying thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand and table a response to written question no. 33.

The Speaker: — Response to question 33 is tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, at the conclusion of the week, I was pleased to enter the budget debate and to second the hon. member for Canora-Pelly's . . . Canora, I guess . . . his . . . Canora-Pelly's motion, Mr. Speaker, amendment to the budget.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, unfortunately, doesn't meet the mark that the people of Saskatchewan felt was necessary to put our province back on track. Clearly this government has taken a dramatic turn over the last few weeks and few months from where they have been fiscally over the last number of years.

This is a government that has now abandoned the principles of fiscal responsibility; have abandoned the fact that there is legislation in place to prohibit them from doing a number of things which they have done now in the budget.

They offend the fact that, Mr. Speaker, there was legislation presented by a former minister of Finance, that did not allow for the things that now they are doing. And simply hiding within the deficit of this province, a number of things that the people of this province should be very, very concerned about.

The use of a rainy day fund that doesn't exist, Mr. Speaker. And the member in the legislature, chastising the opposition for saying spend it, simply isn't the fact, Mr. Speaker, simply isn't

true.

This is a government, this is a government, this is a government opposite that wanted everyone to believe that there was money sitting in a bank account somewhere that could be drawn on. Now it's clear that the people of Saskatchewan understand that there is no bank account; there is no funds to draw on. There is no resources that this government has other than another bank draft that they are using to so-call balance the budget here in Saskatchewan, using every inappropriate step they can possibly come up with to hide a deficit to somehow or another convince the people of Saskatchewan that they are still the fiscal responsible people that they claim they have been of the past.

And clearly the people of Saskatchewan haven't been fooled by this latest effort by the NDP to mislead them, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Saskatchewan also understand that clearly the province of Saskatchewan now has Crown corporations that are slipping further and further into debt here in Saskatchewan, as a result of the efforts, once again, of the NDP to convince the people of Saskatchewan that they are managing the finances responsible here in Saskatchewan.

And I found it very interesting, the quote that we found over the last few days about the balanced budget legislation that the NDP was so proud of back in '95 when they introduced it. And the minister of Finance, I believe the minister of Finance of the day was making all kinds of comments about how governments of the future should have to respond to the legislation that they were introducing at that time.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, this government now has offended virtually all of that legislation, all aspects of it, and still are clinging to the hope that the people of Saskatchewan will be fooled into believing that they have managed the finances of this province in a responsible manner.

And I think that the most telling comment probably of all in that statement that the minister of Finance made in 1995 was with respect to what will happen to a government that offends these principles that were in that legislation, saying that a government that offends this piece of legislation will first of all present it, be found out, and then the people of Saskatchewan in a resounding fashion will fire these people unequivocally.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And, Mr. Speaker, I suspect it will be pretty hard for the Minister of Finance and the Premier of this province to go before the people of Saskatchewan all over the province in budget meetings and try and once again convince them of the fiscal integrity of this government when clearly they are violating the legislation that those two members themselves voted in favour of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, over the weekend we've been hearing a lot of comments about the budget from people across this province, seniors that are

offended by the increases that they now will face as a result of the changes that this government has made to home care and to seniors' care and prescription drug care here in this province — sharp increases, similar incidentally to the increases that farmers will face in agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

We are hearing a great deal about that in addition to concerns about health care, concerns about water quality and water testing here in this province. A government that stands before us in the legislature on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, and trumpets the fact that they are going to provide the people of Saskatchewan with a good quality water testing program and then slashes the budget by roughly \$1 million in this latest budget — and stand once again here in the Assembly this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and say to the people of Saskatchewan that they are going to come down later this week with a definitive statement on what kind of water quality we can expect.

Well if anything that we've learned to expect from the NDP over the last number of weeks and last number months is, what the people of Saskatchewan can expect is more boil-water orders from this government and simply not addressing the concerns that they have in that respect either.

Mr. Speaker, as the official opposition critic for Agriculture, we heard a lot of concern over the weekend as well from farmers about the misleading, once again, statements of the Minister of Agriculture about what kind of changes that they can expect in the Crop Insurance Corporation, their premiums.

And the South Saskatchewan River Irrigation District has written to the Minister of Agriculture. And we have a copy of that letter — very concerned about the changes; looking forward to a response which I suspect will be long in coming from the Minister of Agriculture with respect to their concerns.

We have a letter on hand from the Canadian Wheat Board outlining a very serious issue that they have identified for farmers when they contemplate putting in their crops this spring and arranging for financing to put their crops in.

As a result of the NDP's anywhere from 40 to 200 per cent increases in their premiums, now they . . . it puts at risk another part of the safety net that has been put in place for farmers, and that's the spring cash advance program. As a result of the changes opposite, Mr. Speaker, the farmers now will be forced to buy crop insurance in order to qualify for the spring cash advance and as a result of the changes, will be forced to pay sharply higher premiums.

So at a time when farmers all across this province are making their seeding plans; at a time when we have a, unfortunately, an ongoing drought here in Saskatchewan; at a time when we have low commodity prices; at a time when we have net farm income projections plummeting here in Saskatchewan; at a time when we have livestock producers all across this province very concerned about water resources, Mr. Speaker; at a time when we have concerns about legislation in the United States, with respect to speciality crop prices and farm . . . the farm Bill in the US; at a time when we probably can least afford to put at risk the producers of this province, the NDP government opposite brings in premium increases as high as 200 per cent for

the farmers of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, if this government did nothing for the farmers of this province, we'd be a whole lot better off than where they are right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And the farmers are . . . And the farmers in the coffee shops across this province were saying to me and members of the . . . of this side of the House, and I'm and I'm sure to members of that side of the House if any of them dared to speak to any farmers over the weekend. They were saying to them well, thank you very much for all your help, Mr. Finance Minister and Mr. Minister of Agriculture here, in Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, we can't live with your enhanced program as it stands, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Minister of Agriculture. That's the kind of response that we were hearing from them.

And I was speaking to a convenience store owner over the weekend who now has a tarp hanging over the cigarettes in his, in his establishment, and he was talking about how naive this government must be to think that the young people of this province don't know what is hiding behind that tarp that he has hanging there. And somehow or another, and somehow or another, if we don't allow these young people to see that, they won't be tainted by this in some fashion, Mr. Speaker.

It's an attitude that the NDP exhibit in almost every fashion here in Saskatchewan. If they don't know about it, if they don't see it, it's impossible for them to be affected by it. That's the NDP's attitude.

And yet, and yet, in this province, the Minister of Finance and the Premier may not be aware of it but, on the rare occasion, people from Saskatchewan do travel outside of this province, Mr. Speaker. And in fact, not only are they travelling outside of this province, Mr. Speaker, they're loading up a U-haul and hooking it on behind their car and moving outside of this province in record numbers, Mr. Speaker.

They're voting with their feet in record numbers in this province. They're saying to this Minister of Finance and this Premier that we are no longer willing to put up with a government that doesn't understand the priorities that are necessary here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Is it a priority or should it be a priority to buy a dot-com in Atlanta, or should it be a priority to provide health care and home care and senior care for our citizens here in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Is it a priority to invest in infrastructure in Australia, or is it a priority to support agriculture here in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Is it a priority to have a land titles computerized system that the cost has gone from \$1 million to \$80 million, or is it a priority to have good quality health care and highways in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Those are the concerns that the people of Saskatchewan have been raising with the official opposition — and I'm sure with the government — over the weekend, Mr. Speaker.

This unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, is a government that has lost its way, lost its direction. Many of the government members opposite on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, I think understand that. I think they recognize that this Premier simply doesn't know what the priorities of Saskatchewan should be. This Premier doesn't have a plan for the province of Saskatchewan. This Premier doesn't have hope for the province of Saskatchewan. This Premier does not want to respond to the concerns of this province, Mr. Speaker. And I say, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will accept the advice that Janice MacKinnon gave them in 1995 and throw them out of office, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, there are many people, I understand, that want to enter the debate with respect to this budget. I wholeheartedly second the motion put forward . . . the amendment put forward by the member for Canora-Pelly, Mr. Speaker. And at this time I'll take my place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to enter into debate on the budget. And first of all, as this is the first time I've been on my feet since the session began in a formal way, I want to commend you, Mr. Speaker, and say that we welcome you back and cherish the good sense and judgment that you bring in presiding over the proceedings of the House.

I also want to extend my congratulations to the hon. member for Saskatoon Idylwyld who has entered our House since that time that we last met.

I also want to extend my thanks to my own constituents who have seen fit to have me serve as their representatives for in excess of 15 years now.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my thanks to my family and personal friends and supporters who have supported me over that period of time, and to say how much I do appreciate that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it will be no surprise to anyone that I support the budget, of course. And I must stand opposed to the amendment — to the non-confidence amendment — moved by the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the hon. members opposite, including the last hon. member, the member from Kindersley, who went on some hour and a half, in excess of that, in his debate starting on Friday — and I do commit to the House that I will be shorter than that — and I look at the amendment that he was so proud to second and why does it say that we should . . . that this Legislative Assembly should lose confidence in the government?

It's because in part — and focus on the amendment — because of it's attempts to hide this deficit through accounting changes. That is the argument, the meat and potatoes argument of the opposition as to why the budget should ought to be opposed.

And they shout from their seats that they're cooking the books, Mr. Speaker, and it goes on and on. That's what they shout from their seats. It is because when it . . . after all was said and done, Mr. Speaker, because they take umbrage with the use of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that this government, by according to prudent management, is using wisely on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

The Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Mr. Speaker . . . And I remind the hon. members, not what I said, not what the Minister of Finance had to say, but what the editorial of the *Regina Leader-Post* had to say about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in November 22 of the year of 2000. And what did it say? And I quote, Mr. Speaker; it said this:

What must be kept in mind is that these are windfall revenues — which, by definition, means that they might be no more than a one-time spike in revenues that won't be repeated next year if oil and gas prices drop. Thus, it would not be prudent to spend this extra cash in a non-sustainable fashion. In fact, it would do more harm than good, for instance, to use it to increase health care spending this year, only to have to consider a cut in funding next year if oil and gas revenues decline.

And, Mr. Speaker, I add it was because of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that this government made the commitment, which is repeated in this budget, to spend some \$900 million over the next three years as a part of fixing the roads.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what did the hon. members have to say at that time about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that they say, these days, is a source of cooking the books because we are . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I'd like to remind the member I just earlier this day made a ruling about use of that phrase. And I think in order to be consistent, the members on both sides of the House ought to respect the language that's requested in this House. I ask the member to withdraw the statement and then proceed with his remarks.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the statement and I will listen carefully to the words of the hon. members opposite as they shout across their criticisms about the performance of this government, Mr. Speaker, however they may choose to phrase it.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we go back to the year of 2000 when the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was introduced, what did the hon.

members have to say at that time? The Regina *Leader-Post*, November 21, 2000 said about the hon. member for Canora, the Finance critic, said, and I quote:

Krawetz says he wants a fall session of the legislature to debate how to spend the money.

To debate how to spend the money. Now maybe he was misquoted. Maybe he was misquoted.

I quote from the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) report of the hon. member from Moosomin in the *Kipling Citizen* — hardly in a position to be misquoted, Mr. Speaker — and he said, and I quote, on November 25, 2000:

The Saskatchewan Party has called upon the Minister of Finance to confirm he is indeed sitting on a secret bundle of cash, and if so, recall the Legislature so it can be debated as to how to best spend this windfall.

He misquoted himself apparently, Mr. Speaker, if one is to believe, if one is to believe this egregious error that has occurred, this irresponsible management of government finances, Mr. Speaker. And then, and then the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, December 2, said, and again I quote:

Saskatchewan Leader Elwin Hermanson called Friday for a special session of the legislature to debate how the province's \$370 million oil and gas surplus should be spent.

(14:45)

There he is. Spend it again. Over and over. Well, Mr. Speaker, they may wish that they never said it but they did.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that when you look at the track record of their comment on the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, it is proof positive that number one, they do not understand how to manage the finances of the people of Saskatchewan; and that number two, they are incapable of managing the finances of people of Saskatchewan; and number three, Mr. Speaker, why the people of Saskatchewan will never give them the opportunity to manage the finances of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there it is — the nattering nabobs of negativity coming from the opposition, doing what they do best which is to oppose, to whine, to complain, to bring doom and gloom. That's what they do best, and it's what they'll be able to do for a long time, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I support this budget because I believe it is a clear response to the fiscal challenges that face the province in these uncertain economic times. It meets the challenges that we have head on by supporting economic growth and quality education and healthy self-reliant families.

It will be a source of irritation to the hon. members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that this budget includes 129-new-million dollars,

129-new-million dollars for health. Now what do they have to say about health?

We haven't heard them say a whole lot about health, Mr. Speaker, except criticize. And when Mr. Romanow came to Saskatchewan to hear proposals for the improvements of health in our nation, the Premier was there, the Minister of Health was there, talking about this government's strategy for ensuring sustainability of effective health care for the people of Saskatchewan.

The Health critic was there. He was there, Mr. Speaker. And what did he say, Mr. Speaker? He said nothing. Like a bump on a log, like a bump on a log, he said nothing. When it comes to putting your mouth where the money is, Mr. Speaker, he couldn't engage. He couldn't engage.

So there it is. But you ask them to moan and groan and complain and whine and give you gloom and doom and, Mr. Speaker, they are the masters.

No clear statement on health care. But we've made it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that we stand for accessible, high quality, public-funded medicare. No health taxes like their friends in Alberta, like their friends in BC (British Columbia), Mr. Speaker.

I spent this last weekend, Mr. Speaker, visiting some family, my parents, my father in Alberta. And I did get a chance to take a look at the *Calgary Herald*, that great, that great left-wing publication, the *Calgary Herald*. And it said two things that I noticed, Mr. Speaker. It said a headline, a description about the Saskatchewan budget. It said, "The Saskatchewan budget balanced using savings." Whoa, whoa, that was devastating criticism from that great publication of left-wing rhetoric.

And then what did it say yesterday in the *Calgary Herald*, Mr. Speaker, when I picked it up? It said that their great friend, Ralph Klein, that great defender of health care in the province of Alberta yesterday, on April 1, introduced a \$20 a month family increase in their medicare premium, taking the medicare premium in Alberta in excess of \$1,000 — near \$1,100 a year health care premium raised by their friends in Alberta.

Well, Mr. Speaker, do we assume that's where they want to go? It would be nice to hear, it would be nice to hear where they stand.

Mr. Speaker, \$78.6 million new in Education, bringing it to 1.2 billion. This government's commitment to education of the young people and people shaping their careers in our province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to focus my remarks this afternoon on the part of the budget which focuses on healthy, self-reliant families and to make some comments related to the delivery of social services as it's encompassed in the budget that we have before us.

And first of all, Mr. Speaker, may I say what a privilege I consider it to be in a democracy to serve the people of Saskatchewan as the member of the Executive Council responsible for Social Services.

Surely when we think about the role of government and the role of a democracy for our people, surely the most noble of all roles is the role that government plays to be an equalizer, to be a protector of those who are most vulnerable in our society.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just simply want to say and to put on record what a special privilege I consider it to be as part of my political career in the service of the people of the province of Saskatchewan to serve in this department as the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Social Services budget, which is a budget of restraint because it is . . . in fact the whole government's budget is a budget of restraint but which in spite of restraint moves forward on a number of progressive fronts.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, it has to be said that as part of the reorganization of the budget that the Department of Social Services is shrinking. We will have some nearly 23 fewer employees in the Department of Social Services as a result of this budget. But I point out, Mr. Speaker, that I'm pleased that we're able to manage the vast majority of those through vacancies. And the losses in positions, where do they come from, Mr. Speaker? From administration, financial services, human resources, communications, and policy development.

No, no front-line workers are affected. And that on top, Mr. Speaker, of 54 new family and youth workers who were introduced by the budget of this government last year and opposed by the hon. members opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Child Benefit will also be reduced in this budget, when members look closely at it. But I want to explain, Mr. Speaker, that in fact there is no negative effect on the people of Saskatchewan as a result of that; because it is reduced by exactly the amount that the federal government has increased the Saskatchewan Child Benefit.

Why is that, Mr. Speaker? It's because this government made a decision in 1998-99 to in fact introduce to the people of Saskatchewan the whole benefit right up front, and paid both the federal and provincial amounts at that time. And so what we have this year is a planned reduction as the federal amounts increase, and that will continue until the full federal implementation in 2004.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that got out ahead of the federal government and ensured that Saskatchewan people would get the benefit in advance.

There's also, Mr. Speaker, I'd point out in this budget a \$14.8 million decrease in the payments budgeted for social assistance. Now I point out as well, Mr. Speaker, we haven't reduced the benefits and we haven't thrown anyone off social assistance. What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is introduced a number of programs to remove the barriers to employment.

Now I want to quote the Leader of the Opposition, because he has a view about social assistance and the budget for it. And I quote from *The Leader-Post* of October 2 last year in an article entitled: "Saskatchewan Party policy." And what does the Leader of the Opposition have to say about Social Services? He says:

Also on the chopping block is the \$25 million to \$50 million he wants to trim off spending by changing the welfare system.

"Where social services becomes more of a job-placement agency rather than perpetuating people in the welfare cycle," Hermanson said.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me point out, point no. 1, this is not a new idea. This brainwave that the Leader of the Opposition was having last year is not a new idea. Mr. Speaker, we introduced it in 1997. Hello. Is there anybody home over there?

In 1997, Mr. Speaker, we moved away from a passive entitlement system to one of support for those in need in order to remove the barriers for employment. And in this budget we expand the Jobs First initiative which was introduced on a trial basis in Regina and Yorkton this last year and is now going to be introduced across the province. And through the reorganization of bringing the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services offices into Social Services will enable us to continue to move forward, helping to connect people that are inquiring about social services to the most important and most valuable form of income security, which is a job.

Mr. Speaker, for those who are not able to work, the first step program will help with transition planning, counselling, or assisting people in developing skills.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, the building independence program as we introduced it in 1998 has received national and international recognition from both the OECD, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, as well as British Members of Parliament travelling this nation looking at social safety nets and commending the performance of Saskatchewan.

This is a system that was not designed with cost savings as the ultimate goal. It was designed to remove the barriers and support Saskatchewan people, low-income people to attach themselves to the labour market. But as a matter of fact, cost savings are the result to the benefit not only to the individuals but to the province of Saskatchewan.

And so I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, there is only one way, there is only one way that the Leader of the Opposition can have his way by cutting the budget of Social Services by \$50 million and that is by slashing programs to support families and vulnerable children. That's the only way. There is no explanation.

And, Mr. Speaker, can any member in this House — and I ask the hon. members opposite to stand up and be accountable if they support their leader — can any member in this House say, in tough times, what you do is you focus, you barrel in on those who are most vulnerable by taking \$50 million away from the poorest of the province of Saskatchewan and still hold your head high?

Mr. Speaker, if there is any member opposite who supports their leader in saying rip \$50 million out of Social Services from the poor of this province, stand up and be accounted now. I ask you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — There is, there is — the hon. member for Cannington, the hon. member for Cannington. Let it be on the record, the hon. member for Cannington says he supports his leader to rip \$50 million out of Social Services.

Is there anybody else? Is there anybody else? He's all alone. He's all alone. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Cannington, Mr. Speaker. Couple of lonely bulls over there, Mr. Speaker. Well we'll watch and see.

Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. Since building independence has been introduced, Mr. Speaker, the caseload in Social Services has gone down by 4,600 since 1998. And there are at this day, Mr. Speaker — this day — there are more than 10,000 fewer kids living on social assistance than there were when building independence was introduced.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I think that is performance. That is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well now the hon. member, now the hon. member says, do you need, do you need the extra money?

I just finished telling the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, that in fact we're spending less money for better results because we are not trapping people in social assistance; we're giving them the support to get themselves into employment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have reduced the number of cases in social assistance in this province without giving a single person a one-way bus ticket out of the province, which is the way that their friends in Alberta decided that they would take on the number of social assistance caseloads. That's not where we're going. That's where they would go. It's the hard, right-wing edge of the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. It is the part of the Sask Party that scares the people of Saskatchewan and we are not going there with them. They stand alone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, since 1993 Saskatchewan stands alone. The reduction of children living in poverty, reduced by 30 per cent — best in Canada. But in this budget, Mr. Speaker, I would . . . I'm proud to say that we are providing an even greater investment in building independence.

Building independence is more than just a series of programs — it's a philosophy, Mr. Speaker. A philosophy that leads to more integrated, holistic approaches to building the capacities for individuals and families to find themselves independent and self-reliant, and that emphasizes the principles of inclusion and citizenship. And, Mr. Speaker, is there anything more valuable that we can offer the vulnerable of Saskatchewan than that?

I would also say, Mr. Speaker, that I am pleased that in this budget that we are investing \$1.3 million more for the Saskatchewan employment supplement. This program helps families leave assistance to the world of work and, just as importantly, makes it worthwhile for people who are the working poor to stay off . . . or to prevent coming onto social

assistance.

Two hundred thousand dollars for legal aid to increase the maintenance enforcement for single parents.

An investment of one and a quarter million dollars in employment supports for families, for young people, for people with disabilities, Mr. Speaker, to help them attach themselves to the labour market.

An increase of \$1.7 million for child care, including in this, a half a million dollars to increase the early childhood services grant from 680 to \$750 a month which helps with child care worker expenses, Mr. Speaker.

Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for 150 new child care spaces.

Four hundred and fifty thousand dollar increase in grants that support children with special needs.

Fifteen new special-needs buses to municipalities to assist the disabled in our communities, Mr. Speaker, to get themselves to work and to be a part of the communities in which they live.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what do these changes have in common, these increases in spending? They are all intended to support people's ability to attach themselves to the labour market.

Another key to independence is safe and affordable housing, Mr. Speaker. And I point to the reorganization which has brought housing now into the Department of Social Services.

(15:00)

And in that regard, Mr. Speaker, I want to let the Assembly know, and the people of Saskatchewan, that we are working with the federal government to develop a partnership to provide affordable, quality housing to low-income people, that I anticipate will enable us to begin this year to begin the construction of a thousand new housing units in urban and northern areas of Saskatchewan. And I point out, Mr. Speaker, that's on top of 32,000 units that we already have for low-income people in the province today.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the importance of supporting people who attach themselves to the labour market and put that into a context, Mr. Speaker, the reality is this, is that there are some in our province — far too many I would add — who don't know the dignity of paying income tax, Mr. Speaker.

And I would say that when I look at the demographic forecasts that lie ahead in this decade, Mr. Speaker, and the tightening of the labour market which we forecast will peak in the year 2008, and we look at the increased demands and the opportunities for those who have traditionally lived outside the mainstreams of employment, there are opportunities in that challenge, Mr. Speaker.

And I suggest it would be a betrayal of the public trust for those of us who serve in this room, and for those of us who serve in the public service, Mr. Speaker, to have that opportunity, in the

dynamics of the real world of employment in the province of Saskatchewan, and not to use the opportunity to support those who have lived outside the mainstream, to attach themselves to the labour market and to once — perhaps many for the first time — to know the dignity of paying income tax and being able to participate in that great Canadian exercise called complaining about your income tax.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there are far too many — there are far too many who have never known that dignity, and this is a government which stands firmly committed to support the most vulnerable low-income people with disabilities in our society to become active participants in the labour market, and to become independent and self-reliant. Mr. Speaker, that is government at its noble best.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out that 2002 is the fifth straight year that Saskatchewan residents will see their personal income taxes go down, contrary to the wailing and gnashing of teeth that you would hear from the opposite side.

And I point out, Mr. Speaker, that in this year the average Saskatchewan family will pay almost one-third less in taxes than they did in 1993. In fact, there are 55,000 fewer taxpayers — low-income taxpayers, Mr. Speaker — 55,000 fewer low-income taxpayers in Saskatchewan today than before the income tax reform was introduced by this government.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the tools that we use to support the low income in our province are many.

Now before I take my place, Mr. Speaker, I also want to make some comments about an important sector of delivery in Saskatchewan, that being the community-based organizations. I want to acknowledge the community-based organizations have a challenge in recruiting and retaining their very valued staff who provide some excellent services to vulnerable people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, working with the community-based organizations over the past five years, the province of Saskatchewan has increased the funding to CBOs (community-based organization), targeted to wages, by some 23 per cent over the last five years. And we now continue along this path, Mr. Speaker, in this budget by increasing funding for wages to community-based organizations by 4.5 per cent.

Now I know, Mr. Speaker, this does not address all of the recruitment and retention issues but it is a step in the right direction, and our government will continue to work with them to ensure they continue to provide services to the people in our communities.

I know that CBO workers want a multi-year commitment; however, with the financial situation our province is in, Mr. Speaker, the only multi-year commitment I could give at this point in time would be one that neither I nor CBO workers would find acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to note that this budget does not forget the needs of high-risk children. There is \$2.1 million increase for foster care and services for at-risk children.

And I also just want to draw attention of the House to the announcement that was made last week — I guess, it would have been the week before, Mr. Speaker — of \$300,000 to a new safe house here in the province of Saskatchewan as part of the province's strategic response to the committee's report on children . . . bringing advice to deal with children who are sexually exploited and abused.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge the good work and the hard work of the government members on the committee. When the committee delivered its report to the Assembly, then for the government members the really hard work began at that point in time as we worked together to bring the response which will have more debate as we deal with the legislation introduced. And I do particularly want to recognize the hard work of the Chair of the committee, the hon. member for Greystone.

Mr. Speaker, Kids First, the School^{PLUS}, all part of the program to support those who are vulnerable, particularly focused on young people, to assist our young people of Saskatchewan to get the foundation that they need to be better able to support themselves and be independent contributors in our community in the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of pride in the budget, which has been put together by the Minister of Finance and the members of the government in response to the needs of Saskatchewan as enunciated by the people of Saskatchewan in difficult economic times.

I need only look to British Columbia, to Alberta, to other provinces that are talking about deficits to recognize that this is a budget, Mr. Speaker, which represents a good, thoughtful balance between the ability to pay, as supported by the taxpayers of our province, and provision of the services that people of Saskatchewan need and want.

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I stand firmly opposed to the ridiculous amendment that was moved by the hon. members opposite and in support of the government for 2002, as introduced by the Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a great pleasure today for me to rise and engage in the debate on the budget. I was unable to participate in the Throne Speech debate because there was such exuberance and enthusiasm for people to engage in the debate, but I certainly am privileged to be here today.

And so this is my first opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to extend my welcome as well to the new member of the Assembly, the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld.

I remember very fondly some six or seven years ago now that I entered this Assembly for the first time, and it was a singular honour and continues to be singular honour to have the opportunity to represent people of a constituency of this province and particular of Melfort-Tisdale. And I am always very much aware of the great honour and privilege it is to serve the people of this province by way of participation in this

Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, on the weekend we had the privilege to go to Calgary to visit with our families for the Easter season. And despite the fact that the weather wasn't all that great and the highway was very icy and stormy yesterday, it's always good to come home.

But one of the questions that were raised in one of the Easter services by the pastor of the parish that we attended Easter vigil services at — and it was a very interesting question because he asked the question as a pastor in a Catholic community — he said, is what I do in my ministry, is it worth it? Is it what we do as Christians in our everyday world worth it? Is what we do with our families and our jobs and our responsibilities, are those things that we do each and every day, day in, day out, weekends — not only in our place of work but our place of worship, our place of recreation — are the things that we do and what we're all about, are they worth it?

And he went on to talk about, from his perspective, that he believed that for his perspective what he does is indeed worth it.

And it gave me pause and made me think about, maybe that same challenge should be addressed to ourselves here in this Assembly in what we do. And the question very fundamentally being: is what we do in this Assembly, in what we say and the way we conduct ourselves and the image that we portray to the people of this province and how we do that, is it worth it?

And so, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day I would like to tell you very clearly I've come to the conclusion very quickly, that yes indeed, it is worth it because this is very much a business about people. It's a business about debating and discussing, I hope in an intelligent way, the issues that confront ourselves as people in this province.

And at the end of the day we need to be able to tell and believe that it is worth it, and that the people of Saskatchewan believe that what we do and what we say and how we conduct ourselves, is also worth it. So it's indeed a privilege to be here and to hopefully make sure people understand it's worth it.

Mr. Speaker, the other people that I think each and every day may ask themselves that same question — is it worth it? — are the health care professionals in this province. Because each and every day in this province, health care professionals get up in the morning, or get up in the afternoon, or get up later in the evening on 24-hour shifts and put on their hospital and their medical gowns and uniforms. And I'm sure they ask themselves, each and every time that they start a shift, is it worth it? And maybe they don't do it deliberately but somehow, sometime throughout the day, through the week, through the year, they ask themselves that fundamental question.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm here to say on behalf of the people of this province, thank you, thank you, thank you, for each and every day of deciding that what you do is worth it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about health care in this province . . . And I've had the great privilege as well to be the critic for the Health care department for the last two years, and I have

learned a great deal about how the system works and how people are challenged each and every day to provide the services that we all count on.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have come to understand and believe that health care is indeed one of the very most important pillars of our society. It's an important pillar about the way we live. It's an important pillar about our identity and how we think of ourselves as people from Saskatchewan and Canadians. And it's an important pillar of our economy.

When you think of health care, you've got to quickly understand that 75 per cent of the 2.3 health care dollar budget is about people expenditures. The other 35 per cent — or 65/35 or 75/25, somewhere in that order — the majority is for people, the minority is for things if you like. And so each and every day people are reimbursed for the services that they render to the health care system and to each other. And that's an important consideration to make.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a bit today in the time that I have about how I see the issues facing health care, and I would like to put on the record some of the issues that people have asked about in terms of where we stand and how we want to approach certain issues. And I want to do that again today, Mr. Speaker.

But in doing that, I also want to point out and reference to people — because I've heard the Premier a couple of days ago saying, I have never heard the Saskatchewan Party or the Health critic say anything about health care — I'd like to reference him to March 22, 2002 in *Hansard* last year where I outlined at some great considerable length exactly what our position was in terms of health care a year ago. And I stand by each and every word that I said at that time and I don't intend to repeat them into the record but they're there in the official record.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw North just said, well where were you when the health care system was having hearings in town. Well I'll tell you exactly where I was. I was at the hearing. And I made the deliberate decision to sit and listen to what the people of this province were going to say to Mr. Romanow because I thought, and I believe, and I continue to believe, that the health care commission chaired by Mr. Romanow, when they went to the public forum, was not there to listen to a bunch of politicians reiterating their ideological positions but to listen to people, to listen to people who are professionals in the system, to listen to people who have utilized the system, to listen to the people who have very strong feelings about the challenges that are facing the system.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think Mr. Romanow was there to listen. I was there to listen. And many people in this province, politicians, have chosen to go there and make a grandstand political speech. I didn't. I chose not to and that's why I didn't and that's why I think this is the place where we go on the record — and I'm prepared to do that.

So I hope the member from Regina South will have the patience to listen because . . . and also the good patience to go back to *Hansard* to see what I said last year, on the record. This I believe is the public record; *Hansard* is an important document that is there in perpetuity in terms of the public record. So I will

be very pleased to talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to be here to recognize that we made the presentation that I talked about last year to the Fyke Commission. It was in that public record. I also recognize that the government in December of this year came out with an action plan for health care in response to the recommendations of Mr. Fyke and I would like to touch on some of those issues briefly today.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about primary health care and the need to define the role and responsibilities of people to working together in collaborative practice in public health care and primary care. And, Mr. Speaker, we talked about that in last year. It's on the record. We talked about it in the Fyke submission, and I'll say that I support the concept and I do support the initiatives that are going on by the government. And I certainly hope that there's going to be the fiscal wherewithal to make these initiatives come to fruition in a real sense.

(15:15)

Second of all, I would like to say that we talked about again in our submission that the need that was much more logical and efficient to build a regional system instead of the 32 individual health district systems. We encouraged a regional system. The government has moved from 32 districts to 12 regions, and as a concept we do support that. It's indeed completely in line with what we were talking about a year ago, six months before the action plan.

But there's one caution and one shortcoming that I think is important to highlight today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What the government did is essentially took the existing health districts and just reorganized them along the service delivery model that had an arbitrary grouping of health districts, and it went from 32 to 12. And that's well and good in itself. But as I'm sure many members of this Assembly understand, the original configuration of the health districts was not based on good health service delivery models. It was based on community competition and rivalry, by and large.

And by just taking those existing districts and lumping them, I think we've missed an opportunity to do a better job of really looking at what is the logical pattern of service delivery and trading patterns and economic and social patterns in this province, and to look at this as an opportunity to get it right and to build the base for what could become coterminous service delivery areas throughout the province — not only for health, but for education and social services and justice and many of the other services that the provincial government delivers, and have a great deal of interaction with each other.

And too much of too many meetings are spent trying to sort out who's involved with this, what jurisdiction is it, how does the map work. And I really think that the government has missed a wonderful opportunity to get it right and to have those opportunities to build on logical service pattern deliveries for a regional model that could be coterminous with other service across the province. But again, the basic concept I think has merit.

Mr. Speaker, we talked very much in our presentation talking

about the need that we have to really make a better effort on the whole front EMS (emergency medical services) trauma kind of service delivery. And again we support the fact that the ideas of having more qualified people on the front line in EMT (emergency medical technician), specialists and paramedics, and that there should be some educational opportunities for these individuals to improve their status and qualifications is important. We support that.

We also said — and the government has not seen fit to support our suggestion — is that we believe that there is a critical function for a STARS (Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society) type helicopter trauma unit to provide that real severe trauma support in the province and that that is an important component of providing the full spectrum of trauma relief. And unfortunately, the government has not chosen to act on that initiative that we suggested again in our work beforehand and has been omitted from this paper, the action plan.

Mr. Speaker, we proposed in our submission to Fyke and in the record last year, that there should be a 24-hour health help line. And we are again pleased that the government has seen fit to support that concept and put it into the action plan. And again, I think that that's an important initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about the need that there has to be additional funding for primary research and that our commitment to an integrated health sciences facility building and the College of Medicine and the research component at the University of Saskatchewan, particularly building on the opportunities around the synchrotron, creates an opportunity for us to really buttress up the commitment to research in this province.

And I note in the budget that there has been, percentage-wise, a pretty significant increase in commitment to health research — in dollars it isn't as much as I'd like. And, Mr. Speaker, it also troubles me that we do not have, I believe, a fair share of the Saskatchewan or the Canadian research dollars available in health care because some of the ideological shortcomings of this government, in the pharmacy business particularly.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talked about the need to improve the educational opportunities for front-line health care workers, that it simply is important that we train more professional health care workers in Saskatchewan. But even more importantly than just training them is building a very strong full-court press in terms of making sure they understand how valued they are as people in this province and how needed they are in the health care system, and doing everything that we can to make sure that they understand that there are quality, full-time jobs for them in this province when they graduate from their courses and training.

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP government came out with their action plan, they really didn't say anything new. They didn't come out with any new initiatives that we had not already identified and it wasn't as if we had the wisdom of all the ages when we identified those issues. They've been talked about in the health care system for years.

And it's absolutely an amazement to me that this government has been so closed minded, so unwilling to listen to the people

working in the health care system, that they haven't had this plan together years prior, so that we could be well on our way of trying to see if there's some real benefits from these initiatives. And they almost waited until the last moment — after study, after study, after study — to finally realize the information was before them all the while.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the budget and I see that there has been added approximately \$129 million to the health care budget — excuse me, Mr. Speaker — and that sounds like an awful lot of money and to most of us \$129 million is a huge amount of money. And I do appreciate that the health care budget in difficult fiscal times had a significant increase. But I would like to point out some of the challenges that there are going to be in how this money is going to be allocated.

First of all, the health districts as the 32 districts of the now, the nine health regions are going to continue to inherit what, I guess a person could say, is a structural deficit from the past. Last year there were significant deficits in all . . . virtually many of the health districts.

This year because the government chose just to write off those deficits, districts that worked real hard to balance their budget are saying, why should we? Why should we bother? So I suspect that there's going to be more districts with deficits than there were the year before.

And so a good chunk of this money is already committed or eaten up by what I would call structural deficits already occurring in the districts. And that's a great concern.

The second area that's going to be of a concern, is there has been a concern about the replacement of capital. Not so much bricks and mortar and buildings but needed medical supplies, equipment, new technology in terms of imaging, new technology in terms of testing for the different blood processes, etc. Basic ward equipment is badly in need of replacement and many of the devices that are being used are getting to be at the extreme end of their life expectancy. And so this equipment replacement dollars is going to be a very critical issue.

And the third and final issue that's a grave concern and is going to be a significant challenge is the whole issue around reimbursement for medical professionals. We heard over the weekend that the Alberta nurses have settled for a 20 per cent increase. That's going to have a significant amount of pressure in negotiations in Saskatchewan, I assume. It's going to be there.

And in Alberta last year, before an election, they increased even larger which increased the pressure right across the country, and didn't serve anybody particularly well by one province poaching medical personnel from another province. It isn't helpful, quite frankly, and it isn't going to do us any good to have those kinds of cost escalations. Because at the end of the day, this is going to take huge chunks out of the available medical budget, and it's a concern.

Mr. Speaker, where this all leads is to a fundamental thing that needs to happen that hasn't happened in Saskatchewan, is it's going to be a difficult challenge for any government to sit and live with the reality of trying to juggle a diminishing economy.

And that's what this government seems to be satisfied to do.

The only long-term solution to any of these issues is going to be to grow the economy, to build a plan to grow the economy. And I think that that's what needs to be done. And the record of this government, quite frankly, is pretty dismal.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure other people are going to talk at much more length about the economic plan that was put forward by ourselves and discussed right across this province for growing the economy. I will leave it at this stage to say that that is a critical and essential component philosophically to deal with the whole health care issue.

Mr. Speaker, I watched with interest when Mr. Romanow tabled his interim report, and there were those that said there wasn't much in it; and I was one of the people that said well, I don't think that you should expect any more. Mr. Romanow, I think, at that stage of his whole commission process, clearly identified the main issues and the main concerns that were before the people of the province and of this country.

And I was commenting and saying Mr. Romanow deserves a chance to let his process go through to completion. And I am hopeful that Mr. Romanow is going to do this in a thoughtful way. He has a significant budget.

And I was very interested when I listened to the hearings. I think it was Mr. Robinson who spoke on behalf of the taxpayers association and said a number of things, but the one thing that I thought was relevant to me, at least, from what he said was that whatever decisions we should make and whatever information we bring to the table should be based on empirical evidence rather than just blind ideology. And I think that's true.

If some other jurisdiction in another part of the world is achieving significant improvement in the quality and the way they deliver health care, then why wouldn't we look at it? But it has to be demonstrated in an empirical basis and not on a lot of anecdotal evidence that seems to point in a certain direction, and it also has to be able to be made applicable to Saskatchewan situation.

I listened to a conference where a gentleman from Sweden came and talked about the health care system and how they were changing in Stockholm. And he was saying one of the things that seemed to result in some significant benefit in Stockholm was that they privatized one of the hospitals.

But remember, Stockholm, Sweden has a million people in it. It has seven or eight major hospitals, and for them to take one hospital and experiment with it might be appropriate to their situation. But I don't see in the world how it could apply to Saskatchewan's situation. And that's what I mean about talking about transferring ideas that may work in another jurisdiction and might not automatically apply in our situation.

We've got to make sure that what we look at is based on empirical evidence and it can be transferable, in a positive way, to our situation.

In a response to that whole report on February 7 of this year in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, there were some interesting

comments made by the Premier about the concept of user fees, and I want to talk about that today.

And I want to say this, in a direct quote from mister . . . our Premier. And I quote:

“We are not at this moment persuaded that user fees add any benefit to the health-care system,” (and I quote) Calvert told reporters.

He goes on:

“Our fundamental position is, remains and will remain, as long as we remain in government, that our access to necessary medical services should not be determined by what’s in our wallet, but by the medical need.”

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree with that — I agree with that completely. But let’s make sure that we’re understanding and talking about the same concepts.

Mr. Calvert, the Premier, is quoted in here as saying that he doesn’t support user fees that take away from people acquiring necessary medical services. And the Premier is right. But, Mr. Speaker, then how does he square what he’s doing to senior citizens today? What is the increase of user fees to access long-term care? Is that the user fees he’s talking about? I suspect not.

So then how do you square the circle and say to the people of this province, if you’re a senior, your user fees are going up by 40 per cent minimum, because as the Health minister got up in question period today and said, they’ve got the money.

Well the Premier said it shouldn’t be based on what’s in your wallet; it should be based on your medical need. So how do you justify those two irreconcilable positions? And the members opposite say to us, what’s our position? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to know what theirs is.

Mr. Speaker, I have said, and the Saskatchewan Party has said, that user fees that deter people from acquiring necessary medical help are totally unacceptable. We agree completely with the quote by the Premier. But his own government . . . his own government doesn’t support what he has also said in here.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it’s important that we understand what we’re talking about, you know. And for the government to blindly throw accusation at this side of the House is, I think, a little bit ingenuous at best. And certainly it’s totally unfair to defend their own position. Mr. Speaker, if we’re going to increase the envelope for health care in this province, there is no other fundamental way that we can do it except to grow the economy.

If we’re going to do like the government is and say, we can grow the fees by 40 per cent by charging the ill and the elderly, that’s unacceptable to the Saskatchewan Party. We would rather grow the economy.

If the government’s choice is to increase the amount of money people pay for prescription drugs rather than grow the economy, that’s unacceptable to the Saskatchewan Party, Mr.

Deputy Speaker. And if the government members want to hurl blind accusations at us, they’d better look at their own backyard and ask themselves, what are you doing to your people yourselves? You are the government and you’re putting unbelievable burdens on people.

Mr. Speaker, I had a phone call this morning from an individual here in Regina who said I didn’t mind if I said who he was, but I won’t. At 9:15 I logged the call. And he said to me that he was an individual who has a disabled wife; she’s had numerous strokes over the last four years so she’s had to take only a partial pension because of her disability. He’s a retired teacher in Regina.

And so the two of them have been, and his words were, “very frugal people who managed our funds very well over the years.” He also said that he was a long-time NDP and he made a solemn pledge that after this long-term care policy change by this government, he will never vote for them again. And I will certainly privately give his name to the member from Regina South — and that’s fine, he knows who it is. He’s willing to sort of just ignore people — hopefully in his own constituency — because if he keeps doing it, he won’t be in this Chamber very much longer, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

His wife is disabled; he’s been the primary health caregiver for her for the last four years. He’s tired; he’s disillusioned; he gets home care help, but it isn’t enough to keep him going. He gets some respite help, but it isn’t enough.

And right now he said he and his wife are getting close to the stage where they’ll be at the front of the waiting list for long-term care. And because of his portfolio right now, built up from years of frugal saving, he will be at the maximum amount that is going to be charged for his long-term care.

And he said, this is very interesting because I’m going to be paying almost 40,000 or \$42,000 a year for each of us — \$82,000 a year. And he said, the minister’s right — there’s only 120 of us right now, but there’s soon going to be none of us because it won’t take very long and all of our resources are going to be gone and we’ll be sitting left with 160 bucks like everybody else.

Mr. Speaker, this government has to look at itself in the mirror and say, is that what they’re doing to the people of Saskatchewan? Is this what user fees mean to this government? I’d like the members over there to stand up and say they believe it’s okay to charge exorbitant user fees to the seniors of this province, and yet they say that they’re not for user fees.

Mr. Speaker, it’s because of the hypocrisy of this budget that I am unable to accept it or support it, and I am also a believer that there is much more than we can be.

This Premier sometimes says that he’s the wee Premier of a wee province. Well, Mr. Speaker, this province deserves a great premier because it’s a great province. And I can’t support the budget because they don’t deliver it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want

to let you know at the outset that I'll be speaking against the motion put forward by the Sask Party and wanting to reveal some of the fallacies that this motion implies.

But first of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to bring to everyone's attention that on May 17, 1995 when the Hon. Mrs. MacKinnon was putting forward her Bill No. 62, an Act to maintain financial stability and integrity in the administration of the finances of this province, the very same folks who were so supportive today actually spoke against this Bill.

In fact the member from Kindersley, in speaking of why he was against the Bill and the . . . and why he wouldn't support it, he said, and I quote:

The plan was based on reducing spending and reorganization of the way . . . (it) does . . . business.

And in saying this he's referring to the Klein government. He says:

The Klein government promised to balance the budget by the fiscal year 1995-96 without raising or introducing any additional taxes.

And I think he meant that to be an example to us of how to do things, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the fact of the matter, the member from Kindersley today is probably not bragging about the Alberta approach. And I just emphasize that this very Bill that they were so in support of today in the legislature, they actively debated against in May of 1995. So I just wanted to set the record straight on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I do want to under . . . start with a general endorsement of the budget put forward by our Minister of Finance. And I want to say why I support this budget.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, soon becoming Mr. Speaker, a good budget matches the fiscal capacity of a community to the public's needs. And I think that this budget has achieved that.

As well, I believe that a good budget provides a stable fiscal climate and a competitive tax regime for Saskatchewan businesses and families. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this budget accomplishes that as well.

And I want to go into a little bit of detail just on the parts of the budget that I think I'd like to highlight. For example, Mr. Speaker, a leaner government, savings of more than 40 million over two years. In health care, a 5.8 per cent increase which includes health research, medical equipment, capital improvements. In education, a capital expenditure program of 40 million for K to 12 and 50 million for the two universities.

Mr. Speaker, these are very important investments that will support the attractiveness of our schools and universities to young people and will assist us in recruiting people to choose our universities as the place where they want to go to school.

Of course, we're continuing to build better roads.

One particularly important one I want to highlight, Mr. Speaker, is research and technology. 132 million for research and development in the areas of agriculture, education, medicine, health care, and natural resource extraction and processing.

Now these research investments are very important because they not only allow us to attract high-income jobs to Saskatchewan, but as well they help to create commercial opportunities and value added on the investments that we're already making in education. And I think that to be able to find 132 million for research in this environment is a very huge achievement for the government.

In tax reform I want to point out that 2002 is the fifth consecutive year that Saskatchewan residents will see their personal income tax rates go down and that an average Saskatchewan family will pay one-third less in tax than they did in 1993. And we're not done yet, Mr. Speaker. We have another year on the existing plan of tax reform before we will be completed this first round of tax reforms.

Now on creating jobs and investment, Mr. Speaker, increasing the corporation capital tax exemption to 15 million will be very important because as companies grow and amalgamate, that means they'll be able to benefit from this additional room even though they're combining their forces to be perhaps a larger and more competitive company.

Building on last year's small business tax reduction by simplifying the tax filing and remittance, this is going to make life easier and address one of the concerns that small businesses have had about red tape.

And also, effectively eliminating the fuel tax on ethanol produced and sold in the province. As we see, Mr. Speaker, just in the last few days, there's been a millions of dollar ethanol announcement in the Kindersley area that's certainly going to show that this was the right thing to do.

As far as safe and healthy communities go, there's an additional 7.3 million for policing, 10 million more or an 18.2 per cent increase in revenue-sharing grants for urban, rural, and northern municipalities. And very importantly, a \$756,000 program in the North for northern health access so Aboriginal people can get the professional certification they need to become health deliverers in their own communities. And having lived in the North for many years, Mr. Speaker, I'm particularly happy about that one.

But I want to, for a moment, talk a little bit about the whole question of growth. You know, part of the essence of the Sask Party's amendment is they're questioning our projections on growth and optimism in the economy. Well I have to say that Saskatchewan's GDP, which is the value of our goods and services, grew from 21.2 billion in '92 to 33.5 billion in 2000. And that in January of 2002 over 2001, retail sales were up 8 per cent, department store sales 7.3 per cent, motor vehicles, an expensive item, Mr. Speaker, sales up 12.3 per cent, potash up 23.3 per cent.

And this is one that I think speaks well and is directly connected to our budget as well, Mr. Speaker, that Statistics Canada capital investment projections for 2002 projects that

Saskatchewan will increase by 9.3, the highest percentage increase across the nation. I'm going to say that once more. On capital investment Saskatchewan will experience the highest percentage increase in the nation with new capital investment being expected to exceed 6.9 billion in this year. And of course, that's probably quite closely linked to TD (Toronto Dominion) Bank's opinion that Saskatchewan residents will enjoy the nation's largest average increase in personal income growth during 2002.

So the growth is clearly there. The optimism is clearly there. It may not be there in the members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, but the optimism in the growth is clearly there.

And you know, the opposition talks a lot about tax cuts spurring growth. Well we maybe don't have the same dedication to that notion that they do but we think it's an important part of the mix. And so, Mr. Speaker, when the business community said that the PST (provincial sales tax) was the biggest tax issue facing Saskatchewan several years ago, how did we respond? We lowered the PST by 33 per cent, to the lowest rate in any province with a sales tax in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, following that the business folks told the government that reforming personal income tax was their priority. Our response, Mr. Speaker, the largest reduction in personal income tax in the history of the province.

They, as well, suggested we should cut the small business corporate income tax rate. And how did we respond, Mr. Speaker? We've lowered the small business income tax rate by 40 per cent, and raised the threshold from 200,000 to 300,000.

The same people in the business community asked for professional incorporation. And our response, Mr. Speaker? We passed this legislation last sitting.

And as well, we've increased the threshold for the corporation capital tax to encourage investment in job creation.

Mr. Speaker, we believe we've done what's sustainable. And at the same time, even though they purport to support tax changes, the opposition has done nothing to support these very substantial changes to our tax regimen in Saskatchewan.

Now I have to say that the Scotiabank, who I think I would trust their financial acumen more than that of the opposition and its Finance critic. Here's some quotes from the Scotiabank Group:

The Saskatchewan 2002-3 Budget (is) . . . Challenged, But on Track.

Saskatchewan has been a leader among the provinces in debt reduction . . . steady gains (and) . . . fiscal flexibility have allowed the province to proceed with tax cuts and new spending initiatives.

I'd like to quote this one from the Bank of Montreal Nesbitt Burns, just to get a different financial firm's point of view.

Finance Minister Eric Cline was able to proclaim Saskatchewan's ninth consecutive balanced budget . . . previously planned personal income tax cuts will proceed

. . . The Province's gross borrowing needs will drop substantially in the coming year . . . Government debt is projected to drop modestly . . . taking the debt/GDP ratio down to 21.5% from 22.8.

That's Nesbitt Burns. And again, these Scotiabank quotes and Bank of Montreal Nesbitt Burns quotes are quotes from March of this year.

But you know, when you look at what some of their heroes have done, Mr. Speaker, I noted the quote from the member from Kindersley about the Klein government a little earlier in my remarks.

But in Alberta, what has Mr. Klein's government done? They jacked up health care premiums by 30 per cent. Alberta bumped other taxes up for a total of 722 million annually. Mr. Speaker, any adjustments that we've had to make in our budget pale in comparison to what happened in Alberta.

As well the Campbell government in BC has done massive layoffs. They've reduced the budgets of all departments by 25 per cent and are slashing the jobs of 12,000 civil servants, ripping up existing collective bargaining agreements. And they're planning to drastically reduce welfare benefits and, as well, increase personal health premiums.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think when you look at what other very large and well-to-do provinces have done in this budget, I think the Saskatchewan budget stands up very nicely across Canada as an example of balance in dealing with budgets.

Now I just want to again — the member from Moose Jaw North highlighted this a bit in his remarks — but I want to talk about the Saskatchewan Party's former position on the Fiscal Stabilization Fund because, of course, one of their, one of their contentions in their amendment is that, is that the accounting practices aren't sound and they're contending that this fund doesn't exist.

And yet what we find is that last year the opposition Finance critic wanted a full session of the legislature to debate how to spend the money. The Saskatchewan Party called upon the Minister of Finance to confirm if he's indeed sitting on a secret bundle of cash and recall the legislature so it can be debated how to spend the windfall.

Mr. Speaker, I know they don't like it when you bring up what they said before but they change what they say so often that unless you remind them, they find it very hard to be consistent. In fact, their leader, Saskatchewan leader, and I quote:

Leader Elwin Hermanson called Friday for a special session to debate how the province's 370 million oil and gas surplus should be spent.

And on and on it goes, Mr. Speaker. But I contend that these members can only spend, and I'm going to give you a little more information to support that.

When you look at . . . Last year we had combined with the oil and gas revenues, the one-time revenues, and the approximately 300-and-some million from the Liquor and Gaming Fund that

was transferred over — again all one-time money, Mr. Speaker — they would have spent all of it. They in fact wanted a special session of the legislature to spend it. So that was in total, Mr. Speaker, \$700 million.

I wonder what they would be doing this year if they were the government, if they had already spent that \$700 million.

On top of that, what else did they want to do, Mr. Speaker? They wanted to have even larger tax cuts. Well this year, the tax cut that will be flowing through this year is worth 78 million, and that's just the personal income tax cut not the corporate income tax cuts. If you add those on, it gets closer to around the 90, \$95 million range. If you are going to go faster than that — let's say they wanted to double that tax cut — we'll take it to 160 million because, I mean, faster is faster. So you add the 700 million that they were going to spend last year to the 160 million to speed up their tax cuts this year. That's a \$870 million problem they've created for themselves.

And if you add on top of it the fact that they wanted to spend the entire 90 million on the education buildings out of current year dollars, that would be a \$960 million problem, Mr. Speaker. And that's not including the Ski-Doo trails and everything else. So they have a \$1 billion problem that they would have had to deal with this year if anybody had followed their advice on how to manage the Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker.

And I have to say that . . . another part of their resolution deals with revenue projections for the province. Well I'd like to address that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. Because last week the member from Canora-Pelly was all worked up about sales tax and potash revenue forecasts. And in the debate on the budget he made all kinds of wild claims about unrealistic budget forecasts.

But as I mentioned earlier today, Mr. Speaker, the journalists, in a responsible mode, followed up on this accusation and the headline from *The Leader-Post*: "Potash tax, PST revenue not inflated." Not inflated. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? It means the very premise of their resolution that the revenue projections are inaccurate is, in fact, an inaccurate premise for their resolution.

The story, Mr. Speaker, went on to say that the potash industry anticipates higher royalties and that independent forecasters see an increase in retail sales. So, Mr. Speaker, the member should just relax and leave the forecasting to the experts.

And further, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk just a little bit about the Sask Party coming clean with the people of Saskatchewan about what they really do support. Because I think people have a right to know what a party who's promising to do so much better is actually planning to do.

Mr. Hermanson's tax cutting scheme alone — oh I see now that my earlier figures were much too low — Mr. Hermanson's tax cutting scheme would cost taxpayers \$650 million per year. So on top of the 700 million they were already going to spend last year, their tax-cutting scheme would be an additional 650 million. I mean, it doesn't take much to add that up, Mr. Speaker, to say that that's a \$1.5 billion problem at minimum.

Now how does the leader say he's going to compensate for these massive tax cuts? Well he's going to do it through economic development — he apparently has some kind of a magic pill here. But the real Saskatchewan Party agenda, we know, is a money grab that's going to be a one-time sell-off of assets, that is going to lose head offices in places like SaskTel and SaskEnergy and layoffs in rural Saskatchewan in towns like Kamsack, Shellbrook, and Muenster.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there's over 8,000 people employed by the Crowns and half of those work in rural Saskatchewan. So how many people would lose their jobs as a result of the Sask Party's plan, Mr. Speaker?

You know I have to say that I don't believe for a moment that a private company who bought these Crowns would do the cross-subsidization of rates in rural Saskatchewan. I don't believe they would be worried about protecting jobs in Saskatchewan, and I don't think they would donate to the hundreds of events that the Crowns are one of the main corporate donors in Saskatchewan that support these things.

So I have to say, Mr. Speaker, their real plan is increased taxes, slash programs, massive layoffs, and returns to deficits, because even if you sold the Crowns, Mr. Speaker, you would spend the money. And it's like selling your house to go on a holiday — it doesn't get you anywhere, and you come back home; you still have to have some place to live. So that's just a silly notion, and obviously the people of Saskatchewan know way better than to support that.

And I have to say, you know, normally I get along quite well with the member from Lloyd, but I have to say that when he says that BC is doing the right thing, and the Sask Party is going to do the same. I have to say, Milt — whoops — I have to say . . .

The Speaker: — I think the member knows why I was standing, and I see she corrected herself. The member may proceed, but a reminder not to refer to other members except by their title or their constituency.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I felt so warm and friendly, I got a little too informal there.

Now, you know, last night I had the benefit — I'm going to wrap up here, Mr. Speaker, — but last night I had the benefit of listening to the Leader of the Opposition on a phone-in radio show, and I was very tempted to phone in but he was on a bit of a roll there so I thought I wouldn't interfere.

But when they asked him how he intended to grow the province . . . I mean, I can hardly believe this was the answer. But he said, well there's one per cent of economic growth a year, so we'll grow the population by one per cent a year, as if there was some kind of a link between those two things.

Mr. Speaker, the economy of this province could grow by 100 per cent, and it could all end up in one person's pocket. There's nothing that guarantees that growth is linked to a broad-based benefit unless it's in your philosophy to ensure that that's the case. And I know it isn't in their philosophy. So I thought this was rather a simplistic answer to that question.

But we do have a plan and ours is a real plan. And I'll just review it briefly so that the members opposite can mull it over because the whole issue of growth was the final premise of their amendment to the budget.

And our plan is to encourage capital development and retention. Our plan is to simplify tax compliance for small business. Our plan is to support research and development in Saskatchewan. Our plan is to strengthen the value-added sector of the provincial economy, which most financial pundits believe that we've done quite well. And ours is to assist in the retention and attraction of skilled labour to Saskatchewan.

And all of the outside observers believe we've done that. So I think if the members opposite want to answer the question how, I think they should call up the Scotiabank or Nesbitt Burns or these other people and see why they have such confidence in them.

And just a very last point I want to make, Mr. Speaker. You know, when you do a comparison of taxes and household charges right across Canada for a single person at a \$25,000 income — so any of you out there who are single and living at a \$25,000 total income — if you were living in Vancouver, your total package of services would cost you 13,667 a year. If you were living in — we'll pick someplace else big — Montreal, they'd be 9,986. If you were living in Calgary, they'd be 12,000 a year. And what are they in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? They are \$9,624 a year.

We have a very high quality of life in Saskatchewan at a very low cost, Mr. Speaker. So I will just have to say that if I'm going to put our credibility against their credibility, our projections against their projections, our plan to grow Saskatchewan against their plan to grow Saskatchewan, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have ultimate confidence in the Minister of Finance, the Premier, and this government's plan.

I will be not supporting the amendment by the Sask Party and supporting the budget of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased to stand today to reply to the budget speech.

Before I get started, I'd like to also welcome the new member from Saskatoon Idylwyld. I never had the opportunity to stand before and welcome him. I'm sure he's enjoying his time here in the House and is understanding some of the intricacies of being a member of the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, representing the people of Kelvington-Wadena is really the greatest honour that has ever been bestowed upon me. My area represents part of the sure-crop area of the province, and I'm sure some of the farmers out there are wondering whether it's true or not with the drought conditions. But we really did have a fairly decent crop in most of our area.

We also have more industry-related jobs per capita than any other place in the province. A lot of the area is involved in forestry. Tourism with the provincial parks and many of the regional parks is one of the areas of growth that we're looking

at. And our farmers are looking at diversification including buffalo, sheep, llama, elk, game farms, and we also have a number of pulse growers in our area.

And there's even a lot of our people are interested in the ethanol industry because they believe in the potential of this province.

Bringing their voice into the legislature is a privilege, but effecting the change that they're asking for is really a challenge. I say that, Mr. Speaker, not just because I'm in opposition but because this NDP-Liberal coalition is really an impediment to growth — not just to the individuals in the constituency but to the province as a whole.

The budget that was presented by the Finance minister is one of the many examples of . . . that prove how out of touch the government is with the people of Saskatchewan. The people of Kelvington-Wadena have many areas that I'd . . . they'd like me to talk about. And also in my critic area of education there are people that want to hear what the Saskatchewan Party is . . . would say about that issue.

But before I get into education I want to touch briefly on some of the areas that are of concern to my people.

Mr. Speaker, probably the most important day of session is the day after the budget. That's the day the government spends massive amounts of taxpayers' dollars trying to convince you and I and the media that they're Wall Street geniuses. And . . . (inaudible) . . . that they try and convince everybody they've figured out the very best way to spend taxpayers' dollars.

But, Mr. Speaker, the government did not win the people's confidence with this budget. They didn't win the confidence of the people in agriculture or in education or people upset with crime. In fact the biggest question the people had is why isn't the government admitting they actually have a deficit budget?

I want to read some of the headlines that were in the paper the day after the budget. Bob Hughes in *The Leader-Post* said, "Gov't blaming everything but itself."

Bruce Johnstone said, "Cline performed 'magical' feat."

Murray Mandryk on March 23 said the "Fairy tale budget raises number of suspicions."

Randy Burton on March 23 said, "Creative accounting unsustainable in the long run."

Other headlines were, "Farmers fear gov't (is) ignoring (them) . . . ;" "Tough choices for school boards;" "Universities will have to make do;" and "NDP fudged books . . ."

(16:00)

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency people are saying why doesn't the government just admit they have a deficit? We know that they're playing fast and loose with the dividends from the Crowns. They're saying there's going to be \$300 million from the Crowns put into the General Revenue Fund. There's only once — and that was in 1996-97 — that there was more money put . . . that there was larger dividends put from the Crowns into

the General Revenue Fund than this year.

We talked about the rainy day fund and the \$225 million that we're supposed to be getting from that fund to the General Revenue Fund. And we know that that isn't there.

The government also created an education infrastructure funding corporation, a Treasury Board Crown that's supposed to have \$90 million. It's actually adding \$90 million to the budget without adding to the expense side of the budget, which to most people is called creative bookkeeping.

The government is also budgeting for an increase of \$50 million in sales tax, which is a 6.6 increase. And the budget forecast for growth is only 1.6 per cent of retail sales. I don't know how that can work, but that's what this government is looking at.

The NDP is also counting on a \$40 million increase in potash revenues, and yet the industry itself is stating that there's going to be minimal growth. We're counting on a \$20 million increase in Liquor and Gaming, Liquor and Gaming, and yet the census that was just released just a couple of weeks ago showed we have 20,000 fewer people in this province.

And this NDP government also failed to acknowledge that Ottawa is contributing \$1.3 billion to the province this year through different transfers. I remember when the former Finance minister stated that decreasing the sales tax might be a bad thing because it would spur the economy on and then we would no longer be a welfare state. I don't think we have to worry about that, Mr. Speaker. That isn't going to happen.

By far the largest number of calls I get into my constituency is about health care. And this budget is . . . talks a lot about health care, and yet the two issues that people are going to remember the most are the ones that we talked about today in question period.

This government has decided they're going to increase the rates for some long-term care residents substantially. Instead of 50 per cent maximum that it used to cost you, it's now 90 per cent — as high as \$3,875 a month. Ninety per cent of every dollar over \$828 will be given to the government through long-term health care.

The Finance minister and his colleagues also decided to remove the biyearly deductible for the drug plan of \$860. So any family that's making over \$50,000 is going to . . . can be paying substantially more for drugs. I think only in socialist Saskatchewan can we believe that a family that's making \$50,000 is rich, Mr. Speaker.

The idea of VLTs (video lottery terminal) is an issue that affects a lot of people right across the province. I was looking forward to the report that the government was going to put out a while ago, and I was hoping that they were going to talk about the social economic impact of gambling on the residents of this province, but the report barely touched on it.

The only thing this government saw was an excuse to increase the number of VLTs in the province by 400. Mr. Speaker, VLTs are the crack cocaine of gambling. This government is basically using the crack cocaine of gambling to help balance the budget.

My colleague from Kindersley talked about agriculture and crop insurance and the fact that we removed spot loss hail, removed the variable rate and increased the premium. The premium increases were as much as 200 per cent. But farmers are still forced to buy crop insurance if they want to have an operating line of credit or a Wheat Board cash advance.

There's actually two groups of people that were affected by this change in the crop insurance: the farmers who are devastated; and actually, the crop insurance employees who no longer know if they have a job or not. The ones that were employed in hail, checking the crops for hail damage, are no longer sure that they're going to have a job.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Kindersley also reported that because the government has removed spot loss hail from the crop insurance premium, they have saved \$17,484,799, and the federal government has actually saved that much as well. That's \$35 million, Mr. Speaker, that farmers are going to lose from government, and that's in a year with probably the worst drought since the '30s.

And when we add to that the \$25 million rebate for education tax that was taken out of the budget this year, the farmers have lost \$60 million. It's no wonder the farmers know that this NDP government does not care about the status of farming in this province.

The forage program that was talked about was actually . . . The rainfall roulette ended on Sunday night because March 31 was the last date that farmers could apply for it. That roulette game offered farmers a chance to bid on one of 81 stations in Saskatchewan or one in Alberta or one in Manitoba. And they were gambling that their fellow farmers would reap devastation.

Rural municipal governments were frustrated and disappointed with this budget. Removing the property tax rebate, which was put into effect two years ago to mitigate the effect of reassessment, was actually taken out, and it's going to have a devastating effect on rural Saskatchewan.

This government doesn't seem to realize there's only one tax pair. Everybody knows the importance of education and we want to ensure that education is there for our children. Yet how can property taxes actually pay for education and pay for the infrastructure that we need to keep the province going?

Small towns and villages were looking for help to deal with their streets and their water system but there was no help in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, what happened to rural Saskatchewan in this budget can be best summed up in the words of Randy Burton in *The StarPhoenix* who said on budget day when asked the question what message is this budget giving to rural Saskatchewan? He said, and I quote:

I think the message is that this government wants to carry on as best it can to save its urban seats and leave rural seats mostly to the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Speaker, this budget did more than anything in recent history to enlarge the gap between urban and rural people.

Mr. Speaker, the single largest loser in this budget was education, or to borrow the term from this government, we now have a Department of Learning. That term was used . . . was borrowed from Alberta. I thought the government opposite didn't like anything from Alberta, but we now have a Department of Learning.

I believe combining the two departments of Education is a good idea. In fact it was a good idea when it was one department just a few years ago, it was a good idea when the Saskatchewan Party suggested it three years ago, and it's still a good idea today.

I also like the fact that the government has decided that some of the funds from the federal government that were given to the province for early childhood development is going to go into education. My only fear is now that this government is going to believe that every issue dealing with children before they enter the school system is going to be an education or a learning issue, but the departments won't receive the adequate funding to deal with all the problems.

Lack of funding for education was a hallmark of this budget. The hoopla surrounding this department was impressive. The minister talked about \$1.2 billion. There was even a suggestion that there was a 7.2 increase over last year of \$78.6 million.

But the fact is \$90 million of that money was education infrastructure funding corporation, a treasury board Crown, and it was allocated for education . . . it's for loans and grants for capital work. This money is actually outside the budget. The minister has the opportunity to use it when he talks about education funding, but it isn't shown up as an expense on the expense side of the sheet.

Our critic for education brought this out very clearly, stating that the government is now using a new type of accounting which the former minister of Finance strongly objected to, but this government and the Liberals with them are saying that this is an okay issue.

We also see \$8 million from the municipal government for libraries. This is added to the amount of money that the Minister of Learning states was increased money for Learning. But really, they're expected to take on an additional amount of work, so I don't really understand how we can consider this new money for learning.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in the legislature, in fact everyone in the province, is keenly aware of the need for maintenance in our K to 12 schools and our universities. Education is one of the main keys to growing our economy and as citizens we are responsible as elected individuals to ensure our educational facilities are adequate.

What this government did wrong was to again hide from the public the methodology they're going to use to ensure these funds are spent in an open and accountable manner, and that's through the legislature, through the elected people.

We have to answer to the people who elected us and it is not good enough to say to somebody, some way we'll decide how, when, and where we're going to spend this money, and to who

the capital funds are going to be allocated.

I believe as citizens they need to know the terms of the agreements before they are signed. We need to know the decision process, we need to know interest rates, we need to know what's grants, and we need to know the repayment terms.

We as elected people and taxpayers of the province should all be aware of how this money is spent before it is spent. It's not good enough to find out six months later when some Crown corporation is forced to give the information to the Provincial Auditor.

Is this new type of accounting procedure opening the door for other departments like Health, or infrastructure, or maybe even Highways, to do the same thing? When will we get a real true picture of what this government is doing?

Mr. Speaker, I think it's embarrassing that we're one of only three provinces who believe there is no need for a summary financial statement to be given to the citizens of our province. The people have a right to know how their money is being spent before it's spent. It's like a business person going to a bank for a line of credit and only telling part of the story. Cash flow projections are something that everybody, including government, should be dealing with.

Mr. Speaker, there's really only 31 people in this province who know the whole picture, and when I look across the floor I really don't feel confident the future is in the hands of 31 Lee Iacoccas. I actually wonder if everyone on the government side of the House knows what's going on.

The Minister of Learning would like to . . . would know all about keeping information from people in the province, and that's why he's no longer the leader of the Liberal Party. It worries me greatly that he's the man in charge of a new system that's a secret from the people who are paying the bill.

Mr. Speaker, the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) news release stated that the budget was a signal for hard times for boards of education. This government has emphasized the importance of education, yet when push came to shove they and their minister failed the teachers, they failed the students, and they failed the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the final figures aren't in yet but there's going to be at least 17 boards in this province who will receive absolutely no funding from the provincial government because of this budget. With the increase in the computational mill rates, school boards are expected to raise more money locally to fund education. And this government is again off-loading onto taxpayers.

The increase in the computational mill rate also means there's going to be less money given to other boards as well. The SSTA told the government before the budget it's going to require \$25 million to maintain the status quo. This government in its wisdom decided that 14 million out of the 25 was enough. So now the boards get to decide if they should cut programs, if they should cut staff, if they should close schools, or if they should raise the taxes. In some cases, they're going to have to do all four, thanks to this Minister of Learning.

The \$25 million request didn't include the money that's going to be required when we carry on the teachers' negotiations right now for their wages. School boards will be faced with the prospect of guessing how much of an increase the government's going to give, and then they're going to have to set their mill rate accordingly.

In the next few days, the boards will learn the real impact of the budget. In the next few weeks, the taxpayers are going to find out how much more money the government expects them to pay. School closures, loss of programs, and loss of teachers — this is going to be the legacy for the Minister of Learning. The budget never mentions school board amalgamations or the money the minister promised to set aside to reach the goal that he set at the convention last fall.

In the March 7 news release he promised an early commitment grant of \$15,000 per school division if the motion for restructuring occurred before December 31, 2002. The budget never mentioned the transition funding for each school division on a per student basis up to \$450,000, along with a commitment to maintain the current status for up to two years.

Mr. Speaker, I've already had calls from school boards who wonder if these . . . if the amalgamations are really . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. There should be one speaker at a time. The floor belongs to the member for Kindersley . . . Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've already had calls from school boards who are wondering if these voluntary amalgamations that the minister talked about are really voluntary at all, or if they're going to be forced upon school boards because they're going to need the money in order to keep their schools and their programs and their teachers. By then, they'll be hoping there'll be a change in government and perhaps something will actually happen when it comes to education.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party will make education a priority. It will not be lip service. Our leader, the member from Rosetown-Biggar, stated clearly that one of the key steps to growing Saskatchewan is recognizing that educated, skilled labourers was an integral part of the equation, of growing Saskatchewan.

(16:15)

The Saskatchewan public school board talks about learning for life . . . pardon me, the Saskatoon Public School Board talks about learning for life. I truly wish this government recognized the wisdom of those words. We cannot grow as a province if our actions don't follow our words.

Stating that education is a priority is nothing more than fluff and filler if you don't follow it up with action. Raising property taxes, forcing teachers to be fired, cutting programs is not placing education as a priority.

Mr. Speaker, there are only two other issues that I'd like to speak on briefly. First of all, the number of students in the province. The minister went into a real tirade the other day

talking about the number of students in our K to 12 system and he said that the number really hasn't changed since 1989. He said that really the number of students in the band schools and the number of students in the K to 12 schools was about the same.

But if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, that is truly depressing because then the reality is that the department is losing 30,000 students by the end of the decade and that should tell the minister there's something wrong. If the department is losing 30,000 students, the minister should be asking himself, what's happening? Why are they leaving our system and what can I do about it? Instead of talking about, gee there's nothing we can be doing.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that the minister obviously doesn't talk about because if we had a school system that was enticing all of our students to stay in the system it would be happening. There's 30,000 students preferring not to use the K to 12 system that this Minister of Learning has decided is the right thing for our students — 30,000 students this Minister of Education is chasing away from the public school system.

My last point, Mr. Speaker, is the utter neglect, both the budget and the Department of Learning's had for our Aboriginal citizens. One of the keys to our economic success our leader and our party talks about in our Grow Saskatchewan meetings is our growing Aboriginal population. Partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people — social, economic, education, and health — they're all part of the unlimited potential we have as a province when we all work together to achieve a goal. A bright, positive, and successful future for everyone in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech and the budget speech fail to put forward a vision or a plan that the citizens of Saskatchewan could hold on to. It failed to put forward a plan that the citizens could believe they were part of. And more importantly, it failed to put forward a plan that were to actually help people fulfill their own dreams.

For that reason I will not be supporting the budget speech but I will support the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I stand up at this time, of course, to support . . . Mr. Speaker, I stand to support the 2002 budget as well as to oppose the amendment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll be talking, of course, about good news items in the budget and I'll be also mentioning a small aspect in relation to the concept of debt as well as dealing with some taxation matters.

Now I will move in on the strategy that we had on the balanced approach. As we do the balanced approach, one has to look at in historical perspective and also at the international level.

We know that the Saskatchewan Party represents the conservative, right-wing view in regards to dealing with budgets and in regards to dealing with economic and social development. But in that view, Mr. Speaker, I challenge, you

know, the members from across to come out with a more reasonable, balanced approach the way this government has done over the past many years in terms of balanced budgets as well as dealing squarely with the issues of taxation, debt, and expenditures.

Now, I'll therefore start out with the concept of expenditures. Now on that idea of dealing with expenditures and dealing with it in a balanced way, we have been criticized by the members across on our Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Some people will say that it's our rainy day fund and others will talk about it in many different ways. But they will not agree with our Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Mr. Speaker, basically because they're part of the old right-wing conservative agenda that was very much the same as what I heard from Grant Devine.

I've been in the legislature now for 16 years and I used to listen to the rhetoric of the Grant Devine government and they haven't changed much. It's exactly the same. There is absolutely nothing new.

On the one hand they will say, oh, the member from across says something about Janice MacKinnon. I'll tell you I was in the House, Mr. Speaker, in opposition, and I was in the House when Janice MacKinnon was the Finance minister. Every year that the budget was there, every year with all our Finance ministers, including Janice MacKinnon, every single one of those members voted against Janice MacKinnon and voiced very, very strong words against Janice MacKinnon and the budgets that she put forth.

Now they have a little bit of crocodile tears for, you know, the former premier, Roy Romanow, and Janice MacKinnon, and talking about how great they were, when I know in the past 16 years everything that we have done they have challenged Janice MacKinnon and they had challenged also Roy Romanow every step of the way.

So I think as I look at that idea, I'd like to use their own words in their arguments. Because it's always very good to look at not only the words that I speak and what the public speaks but also the actual words of the members. Now you look at what the quote is in regards to the Regina *Leader-Post* on November 21, 2000. The quote is . . . On the one hand Saskatchewan Party voted against our budget last year when we hired people to take care of the water in Battleford and many parts of our communities, and we had a \$900 million budget on highways and we hired extra workers in the highways to make sure our roads were safe.

But they voted against all of that, Mr. Speaker, but they got a lot of pressure from a lot of people last year and by the fall they had changed their minds. Last spring they said, we were not going to spend anything at all. By the fall they said, let's spend, spend, spend. Now this is what they say it. The quote is:

Krawetz said he wants a fall session of the legislature to debate how to spend the money.

Now listen to this. The quote from *The StarPhoenix*. The next quote is from *The StarPhoenix*, December 2, 2000.

Saskatchewan Leader Elwin Hermanson called Friday for a

special session of the legislature to debate how the province's \$370 million oil and gas surplus should be spent.

So there they go. They saw in the political wind in the springtime, they were going to cut those workers in North Battleford who were trying to help out on the water situation throughout this province and also our workers in the health field and our workers in the educational side, and they were busy saying cut, cut, cut with that new conservative ideological position. By the fall they had changed. They say, spend, spend, spend, spend, spend. We've got money. Don't worry about the rainy day fund; don't worry about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund; let's spend, spend, spend.

And when they feel that . . . The ideologues are always that way. When they feel that they have to do certain things like that, they will change their story.

Therefore I would like to see . . . I would like to look at the quote from the Regina *Leader-Post* which was made here by November 22, 2000. This is what the Regina *Leader-Post* editorial had to say:

What must be kept in mind is that these are windfall revenues — which, by definition, means that they might be no more than a one time spike in revenues that won't be repeated next year if oil and gas prices drop. Thus, it would not be prudent to spend this extra cash in a non-sustainable fashion. In fact, it would do more harm than good, for instance, to use it to increase health care . . . (expenditures) this year, (and) only to . . . consider a cut in funding next year if oil and gas revenues decline.

So even many people in the finance communities as well as editorials will know the folly of the ways of the Saskatchewan Party, which is basically the same old Tory strategy that I saw when I was in opposition here for five years.

An Hon. Member: — They're Tories through and through.

Mr. Goulet: — As my friend says from Saskatoon, these are old Tories through and through.

So when I look at that idea, it's not an idea that's new. When I was growing up, people used to say in Cree:

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Not to put yourself in an excessive hole. So not to go into a great big hole. People knew that from way before in history on personal financial management as well as dealing with credit, as well as dealing with money.

And they also knew that about governments. They knew that if you went for excessive credit and you went into a big hole, only the people that you borrow the money . . . or the corporations or the finance that you borrow money get rich from it in terms of interest payments. They know that from personal experience, and also from experiences from governments.

Now the other matter is in regards to the affordable tax cuts. The members over there will never want to go for affordable tax

cuts. They know from simple right-wing rhetoric that it sounds good to cut taxes, but obviously everybody from an experiential level will like to have their taxes cut.

But what have we done? Over a three-year period we will have the largest tax cut in the history of Saskatchewan going to working families on the personal income tax. It's over \$400 million in peoples' pockets. That'll impact our children, that'll impact the seniors, that'll impact a lot of families. And in that sense, that was a very important tax cut.

But we also did a balanced approach and worked with small businesses. We cut the small-business tax by 25 per cent.

This year on this budget, if you look at our budget as we continue the personal income tax cut, our corporate tax will also go down, you know, by 25 per cent and the threshold limit will also go up from 200,000 to 300,000. So for me, Mr. Speaker, this new corporate tax will be very, very important for business development in this province.

As well, it was mentioned in the Throne Speech that there were tax exemptions to the agricultural community. And the tax exemptions on the agricultural community . . . And I knew from debates in the past that there was approximately over \$150 million on the fuel tax, you know, going to the farm families that need it. And obviously they need it because of what the international situation is, you know, vis-à-vis the huge subsidies in Europe and the United States, but also the problems elsewhere.

But I think that in that sense when we look at it, our position was to help out at that level and there's \$240 million of tax exemptions, you know, for the farm community, you know, in many areas, whether it is on machinery, etc.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I . . . Because I say this in this regard and I know that members got a little bit antsy when I talk about the issue of racism and I talk about, you know, the issue of a guy . . . for example, that Jimmy Pankiw. I mean, he's a supporter of the right-wing ideology. He supports the Alliance. He'll support this and he supported the Saskatchewan Party as well, and he supported the Tories. Jim Pankiw is always a conservative. He will always support right-wing parties.

But one of the things I notice about Pankiw is this . . . And he always likes getting on the paper. But he's very, very interesting.

On the concept he's after, is the question of affirmative action, employment equity. He's attacking, he's attacking people in the case of employment equity. But this, Mr. Speaker, is in the Canadian Constitution. It's section 15 of the Canadian Constitution and it's there as a protection because of our compassionate nature in history to help people in need who have lower income levels, etc. It's part of the social tradition which the right-wing type of ideologues do not like. And Pankiw is one of those people.

But it's very interesting. He only picks on Indian people when he talks about employment equity. He will not talk about employment equity against women. He will not talk against employment equity on disabled people. He picks on Indian and

Aboriginal people because it is hot button politics for him. And that's exactly the reason why he does it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(16:30)

Mr. Goulet: — You know that you don't even see a great majority of First Nations people in his constituency. There is, you know, a couple of the reserves there but in that case he uses the hot button politics.

We provide support in regards to the taxation regimes. I know that First Nations people have supported us on tens of millions of dollars on the corporate taxes they paid. I know First Nations people have been, you know, living off-reserve for many years and they pay taxes, you know, like everybody else, whether it's municipal taxes over here. But I think that's very, very important to recognize that fact that that hot button politics the Saskatchewan Party supporters like Jim Pankiw . . . that's the hot button politics that many people don't like.

The member of course laughs about it, but I know I hit at the truth when I say that. He supported the Conservatives, the Grant Devine people, on their hot button tactic on Indian taxation before they got wiped out in the last . . . in the election, you know, after all their big time expenditures when they ran up that huge, most incredible, ridiculous debt in the history of this province.

Now I'd like to make a latter-day comment on the expenditure side. Out of the \$29 million on the budget in regards to health, in the North we're seeing about \$600,000 for the health centre development in Ile-a-la-Crosse and also on the clinic in relation to Buffalo Narrows. And I know that in my constituency, we had the La Ronge Health Centre; we also have the centre in regards to La Loche and also with Stony Rapids up on the west side.

So in that sense we've done a fairly good job because I knew when I was in opposition the Devine government, the right-wing government, really disregarded the North. There was about a \$60 million cut in expenditures. They also cut a lot of First Nations and Métis programming. I mean, they devastated that, increased it in other areas.

It was that type of strategy that is reminiscent of many of the right-wing history. And in many cases they wonder why a lot of First Nations and Métis people don't vote for them. It's because of the history, the record that they've had in completely disregarding them.

When I was the minister of Northern Affairs and standing up here I never even got one question from the Saskatchewan Party — not even one question. The member from Athabasca, the member from Athabasca said he hasn't been asked anything for 1,000 days. Well I wasn't even asked for many, many . . . All those years I was the minister of . . . and they never asked me anything. They didn't care about the North. The North . . . Grant Devine said the North didn't exist. They said there was beautiful lakes and rivers, but no people — that's what Grant Devine said about northern Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan Party says the same thing by their actions. They choose to ignore people in northern Saskatchewan. Now I see the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, when I see the member, the opposition leader, he scrambles up to Ile-a-la-Crosse over one afternoon one day and he figures he can get votes up there. But it just doesn't happen that way. And I think that in many ways they're going to have to do some improvements.

So we're doing some improvement on health.

We're doing improvements in relation to education. We got a 7.2 per cent increase on the budget; a \$78.6 million increase on education.

We had an issue last year on forestry and we had extra money for forestry development, but forestry education. This year we have a Health Access Program for \$756,000.

And also on municipal, the revenue sharing formula has been improved. We're now getting \$797,000 extra — an 18 per cent increase.

And we're also looking at cost sharing at the federal government. I've always said very publicly that I'd like to see more federal cost sharing and roads and infrastructure in the North which we don't have. But at least we're moving towards a strategy and doing that in housing. We're trying to get this budget to work in strong partnerships with the feds on 1,000 houses in the province and there will be a fair number being built in the North from that 1,000.

Now also on the roads side, we're spending 34 million. I'd like to say that I know that the member from Athabasca will talk about some of the road improvements in his area.

From the road north of La Ronge going up to Brabant and Southend will be improved by over \$1 million. And, Mr. Speaker, my own community, Cumberland House, will also be improved by over \$1 million, you know, on the budget, you know, thanks to the Minister of Highways and the government on this budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I finish off my remark, I'd like to make a final little comment on the debate, note from last week, on the Throne Speech. But it relates to the budget in this sense, that we have a strong support for . . . over the years we are the party that supported the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the formation of it on SUNTEP (Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program), etc.

And we've been continuing the support over the years and we've been doing support on the issue of SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) and NORTEP (northern teacher education program) teacher education. And in many ways the people know that we work side by side with them to build a strong partnership in education.

Now we were debating, of course, The Métis Act, and we passed The Métis Act. Now I was listening to the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood. He seemed to imply that he was supporting The Métis Act on his commentary last week. I would like to say this very, very clearly: he did not. The member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood, like the vast majority of

the Saskatchewan Party members — including the member from North Battleford — voted against The Métis Act. They voted against The Métis Act, Mr. Speaker, not only on second reading but also on the third and final reading.

It was very, very interesting to hear his remarks saying that he supported it when I know he voted against it, not only on second reading but also on third reading. And I think that it's very, very, very, very important for me to point that out. And I point out one other thing on the member from North Battleford. He voted again . . . he voted with the Saskatchewan Party.

The member from North Battleford voted with the Saskatchewan Party against The Métis Act. And he voted against it, Mr. Speaker, on the second reading. He could have come back and had the decency to vote, you know, for The Métis Act, on the third, but he did not, Mr. Speaker. And that's what the historical record shows that the member from North Battleford therefore voted against The Métis Act and voted with the Saskatchewan Party against The Métis Act.

I said almost all of them, but to be fair, Mr. Speaker, there was two members from the Saskatchewan Party that supported it on the voting. But the vast, vast majority of them did not support The Métis Act. And it's that type of thing that causes a lot of concern for a lot of people.

And I feel that I would like to make a final closing comment, Mr. Speaker, and say thank you to a lot of people from northern Saskatchewan who supported me through the years, you know, my constituents.

I'd also . . . Last week one of the key persons that work with me, a guy by the name of Tony Oscieny, who had worked for government in north Saskatchewan for many years, he had a stroke. He came back to do some work for me, and he worked for me for, you know, some time, Mr. Speaker. So I'd like to send a special tribute to Tony Oscieny and his wife, Linda, you know, in their support for me over the years as I do the support for the budget.

Closing comment, Mr. Speaker, a quick commentary in . . . (inaudible) . . . to explain the budget.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I support the budget and I oppose the amendment by the Sask Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this year's budget and in doing so, and when I start, Mr. Speaker, I thought maybe I'd just reminisce a little bit with some of the media headlines and how things have changed in the province of Saskatchewan. And many of these are dealing with the budget or lead up to it, Mr. Speaker.

And I just thought I'd go through some of these headlines because when Roy Romanow's government in the past had headlines in the paper, I don't think you ever saw headlines that I'm about to read to you about the government of the day.

The first one is in the Melville *Advance*, Mr. Speaker: "Economic policy an ongoing disaster." And what they're talking about is lost jobs, the loss of people to other provinces, and deficit budgeting.

Here's another one by Randy Burton: "Bright future, optical illusion. Call an election."

Another one, Mr. Speaker, *Fort Qu'Appelle Times*, so it's all over the province: "Government repeats its disastrous economic policy."

I'll just quote a little bit of Les MacPherson in *The StarPhoenix*, Mr. Speaker. He goes on, and I'm quoting:

Cruel though it is, the drought that grips Saskatchewan is not nearly as bad as the continuing evaporation of jobs.

And again he's talking about the job losses in Saskatchewan.

The drought will end on its own. The evaporation of jobs will not. What's alarming is that the NDP led coalition government seems no more likely to deliver jobs than rain. Figures released Friday reveal 15,000 fewer people working in the province now than there was a year ago. The question is, what are we going to do about it? For answers we look at the provincial government and look and look. The government's response does not reflect the sense of urgency that you might expect when the province is bleeding out. Instead of leadership we get excuses.

Another headline, Mr. Speaker, *The StarPhoenix*. Can I quote: "Calvert's election call can't come soon enough."

This goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. Here we have a quote from Lucien Chouinard, editor of the *Waterfront Press*:

Voodoo economics — have we been misled? Most people in the province thought we had a rainy-day fund sitting, waiting in case we needed it, waiting for Saskatchewan if they ran into problems. Now that the rainy day is here we find out that the pot is empty. So, what's the problem? Now they want to use that money and they have to borrow it.

And what he's going on to say, Mr. Speaker — and he talks about in depth here — is that the rainy day fund is actually invisible, doesn't exist, and when they go to use it they have to borrow money and actually once again increase the provincial debt. Something that Mr. Romanow was so proud of in paying down at that time, now we're seeing this government creating more debt and running deficit budgets.

Another headline, Mr. Speaker, "Government needs attitude change," PA (Prince Albert) *Herald* — I'm sure you're familiar with that, Mr. Speaker. Another one in *The StarPhoenix*, "Calvert stands on quicksand," and I quote. Another one, Mr. Speaker, and this is also *StarPhoenix*, Mr. Speaker, "Job losses sign of government failure."

You know, Mr. Speaker, with so many headlines like this in *The StarPhoenix*, what this government should do, is this government should go and buy *The StarPhoenix*. The best way to put an end to what *The StarPhoenix* is saying about this

government is for that government to buy them because they'd go broke in a minute with this government's track record of getting into business in the province and investing taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, another quote from *The StarPhoenix*. This quote says:

The NDP, in clinging to power in a coalition government (the Liberals and the NDP) has become too scared to make any moves or take any position lest it offend someone. In doing so, it has ended up offering almost everyone who cares a whit for Saskatchewan as they watch young workers, families, and entrepreneurs whom this province badly needs flee for Alberta.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget offends seniors, farmers, bar owners, municipal leaders. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on and on the things that this budget has done to Saskatchewan people.

Another headline, Mr. Speaker, "NDP policies create a poor business climate." And the quote is:

When is the NDP provincial government going to show some initiative and make a concentrated effort to turn Saskatchewan's economy around? For 11 consecutive months, the province has posted job losses. In October, there were 16,200 fewer jobs compared with the same month last year.

To make matters worse, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

Manitoba, which is also suffering from a weakened farm economy, increased their number of jobs by 8,000.

Quite a comparison, Mr. Speaker, when all the resources that we have in Saskatchewan, and Manitoba outdoes us.

Another headline, Mr. Speaker, "NDP government decisions border on madness." And it goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

So times have changed, Mr. Speaker, because short of three, four years ago you would never see a headline like that about the former premier and the government that he ran at the time.

(16:45)

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about this budget and what it's done to agriculture and the farmers of Saskatchewan because, as we all know, this government for the last 10 years has downloaded on farmers. To start off . . . And we all remember GRIP when they cancelled that. And then this government is famous for blaming the federal government for not pulling its load and in many cases we agree with that, Mr. Speaker. But an example, when they . . . this government, the NDP government cancelled the GRIP program, the federal government got to pull back millions upon millions of dollars.

Well what are we seeing again right now, Mr. Speaker, with the changes to crop insurance, with the removal of spot loss hail, the change to variable rates? We're seeing an example of the

federal government being able to take back millions of dollars — their share that would have gone into crop insurance — at a time when there's a possibility of a tremendous drought in this province. And the federal government can pull back some of the money that they had designated for crop insurance because this government has decided to once again download on its farmers, forget them in a time of need, and write farmers off in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to talk just for a second about funding for water projects, Mr. Speaker — something the Minister of Agriculture's bragged somewhat about in here. Well those programs, when you get into them, Mr. Speaker — and I've had farmers in my area experience this — the first program in conjunction with the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration), when a farmer applied, the money was already gone, Mr. Speaker. There was no money left. And many farmers ran into this situation.

I had farmers that actually had to give up waiting on this money, dig a well on their own, spend thousands and thousands of dollars, and then find out there's another program coming. Except the problem being, is this program will not be adequate to handle anywheres near the applications, Mr. Speaker, and the need that Saskatchewan farmers have.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government cancelled GRIP and downloaded onto farmers and now it's doing it once again with the changes to crop insurance at a time, as I said before, when we need crop insurance the most.

Another thing this government promised for the last 10 years when they cancelled GRIP is, well, we'll replace it with a long-term safety net. Well for 10 years, Mr. Speaker, we've heard that being said by this government and to date we still do not have a long-term safety net which could cover things like the drought we may see in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk for a minute on health care and what this government has done to our health care situation in this province and what this budget is going to continue to lead to, the problems that we have in health care.

Yorkton, Mr. Speaker, the regional hospital in Yorkton — old East Central Health District. The same thing we hear day after day after there, the calls we get to my office — no beds, no beds, no beds. The waiting lists get longer and longer.

We had the experience to lose one of the best pediatricians in the province because, Mr. Speaker, there was not adequate beds in pediatrics for that doctor to be able to even make an adequate living. This is a man who is probably classed as one of the best pediatricians in this province — and for that matter, in this country — and we lost him on our side of the province because of policies that we have in health care in this province. We're losing these specialists, we're losing nurses, we're losing all kinds of professionals because of policies of this government.

An interesting scenario may be coming about, Mr. Speaker. East Central Health District — before they were being dissolved as they are now into bigger units — had a \$20 million debt which still sits there, Mr. Speaker. And it's going to be very curious to see what the Health minister and the

government of the day is going to do when they join up with the North Valley Health District and the Assiniboia Valley Health District, in which one had no debt and the other had a very small debt, and they're going to be asked now to join together and assume, I presume, this \$20 million debt.

Possibly it's time, Mr. Speaker, for this government to stand up and write that debt off — pay it down so that this new health district can at least start from zero and provide health care in my area on the east side of the province, in the Deputy Premier's area, that we deserve and that residents of Saskatchewan expect, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to talk for a minute, Mr. Speaker, also about education. And a good part of it's under our current Liberal minister's authority. And a lot of these things have happened under him, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, and probably are going to continue to happen in the years to come if we have the misfortune of keeping him as our Education minister.

Mr. Speaker, at present they're talking about the Rhein School in my area closing. Last year they closed the Bredenburg school. Two years ago they closed the MacNutt school. And it's just a sign of the leadership of this government and that Education minister — a former Liberal member; I'm not sure just what he is now; he was a Liberal at one time, in fact he was the leader — sitting with the government.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, should that member be sitting on this side, he would have the power to stop school closures, to stop the drain of our young people to other provinces. But no, he puts his own well-being ahead of what's good for the province — sits on that side and assists in watching in every one of our rural ridings, school closures, one after another.

We've got kids out there, Mr. Speaker, riding an hour and a half on the bus. In fact, with this school closure there's going to be some of them little kids riding more than an hour and a half in the morning and an hour and a half at night.

Mr. Speaker, how much longer can we afford to have this government if rural Saskatchewan is going to continue to survive? It can't survive under the leadership of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take a minute and talk about municipal funding, something that they've been downloaded on for 10 years. As a past reeve, in fact, when I ran in '95, Mr. Speaker, that was part of the reason that I ran and got into provincial politics was the downloading on municipalities.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw this year . . . last year municipalities asked . . . urban asked for 20 million increased funding; rural municipalities asked for 20 million. And what did we get this year finally? We got \$10 million to spread right across the province. That's for northern municipal government, urban municipal government, and rural municipal government.

Urban municipal government leaders are very disappointed, Mr. Speaker. But what they are saying, at least they got a little bit out of it. But let's talk for a minute about rural municipal leaders, Mr. Speaker.

Rural municipalities in this province, 297 of them, are being asked to share \$4.6 million, Mr. Speaker. Now that's the good news, Mr. Speaker. At the same time they got an extra \$4.6 million, the government saw fit to cut \$25 million back in the education tax rebate that they paid last year and the year before.

So add that up. Rural municipalities, rural taxpayers, and again, Mr. Speaker, farmers are shorted another \$21 million by the government of the day, partly due to that education minister that's making all the noise on the other side, Mr. Speaker. If he was that vocal in the room with cabinet making the decisions, maybe we wouldn't have so many problems in education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, municipalities of all kinds, urban municipalities have many problems out there right now, one being the problem with water and sewer out there. We have many communities where the water and sewer systems are 40 years old. We saw the experience of North Battleford. Perdue has a problem now where they've applied for infrastructure money for three years — turned down.

I believe Elfros is another one now that's having problems — spending \$1,000 a day hauling water. They were turned down. Where's the help that this government says they keep giving to rural communities? It doesn't exist, Mr. Speaker.

Policing costs . . . one-time \$4 million to help communities pay for policing costs, and then what? Something this government's become famous for — you put a little in and then you pull more back. They did it again.

Policing costs have increased all over this province and that's not a rural problem, that's not an urban problem — that's a problem all across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, one thing this budget has hit on, and I'm very surprised with this government, is the seniors of Saskatchewan. The same people that built this province we're turning to now and dumping on them, Mr. Speaker, asking them to pick a larger part of the tab up to help the mismanagement that this government has got themselves into. They're helping them bail them out.

And how are they doing it? Well long-term care home fees, Mr. Speaker. And let's talk about the maximum to start with. It's gone from 1,500 to 3,800-and-some dollars. And that's not the worst part, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the lower-income people. Anybody that's over \$994, Mr. Speaker, had an increase of 40 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have many people caught in this position that don't have, as the Minister of Health suggested today, \$1 million in the bank. In fact very few people in this province would have \$1 million left in the bank after this government's been at it for 10 years.

But, Mr. Speaker, any person out there that is caught in this bind and the changes to the costs that they're paying for long-term care, the biggest concern I think that many of us as

MLAs see out there is that they pay this fee to stay in a long-term care home, what do they do to buy their prescription drugs? And many of them are saying that they just can't afford to fill all the prescriptions that their doctor says that they should be filling.

Now the problem even goes further than that, Mr. Speaker. What about our seniors that are trying to stay at home where I think all of us will agree we would like them to be able to stay as long as they possibly can? Many of my constituents and for that matter I believe everywhere in this province, people are saying that are low-income people or don't have millions of dollars tucked away as the minister said, I either have to decide whether I buy groceries this month or whether I fill my prescriptions.

My parents for an example, Mr. Speaker, are in that exact position because many of our seniors right now, with the cost of drugs, cannot afford to buy the amount of drugs that the doctor is prescribing or they have to cut back on groceries. What a position to put the seniors of this province in — the same people that helped build this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder when history looks back, and what the legacy of this government is actually going to be. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be for about three things: deficit financing the debt, increasing the debt, deficit budgeting, and running the Crown debt up. And I think we saw that before. I believe we saw in the Blakeney days. It didn't show on the revenue side but it certainly showed through when it was on the Crown debt.

But we're seeing it all over again, every area. And Mr. Romanow, Mr. Lingenfelter, Janice MacKinnon, prided themselves on not deficit financing. Well we're seeing it now.

And in fact today the member for Canora-Pelly talked about Janice MacKinnon bringing legislation, balanced budget legislation forward. Janice MacKinnon, I wish you could write another chapter to the book she just finished because I'm certain she would write about . . . exactly about what this present government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, the list just goes on and on and on. And I'd like to talk more but I know there's members on that side would love to get up and I know we have many more on this side, Mr. Speaker. So at this time I would like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.