



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

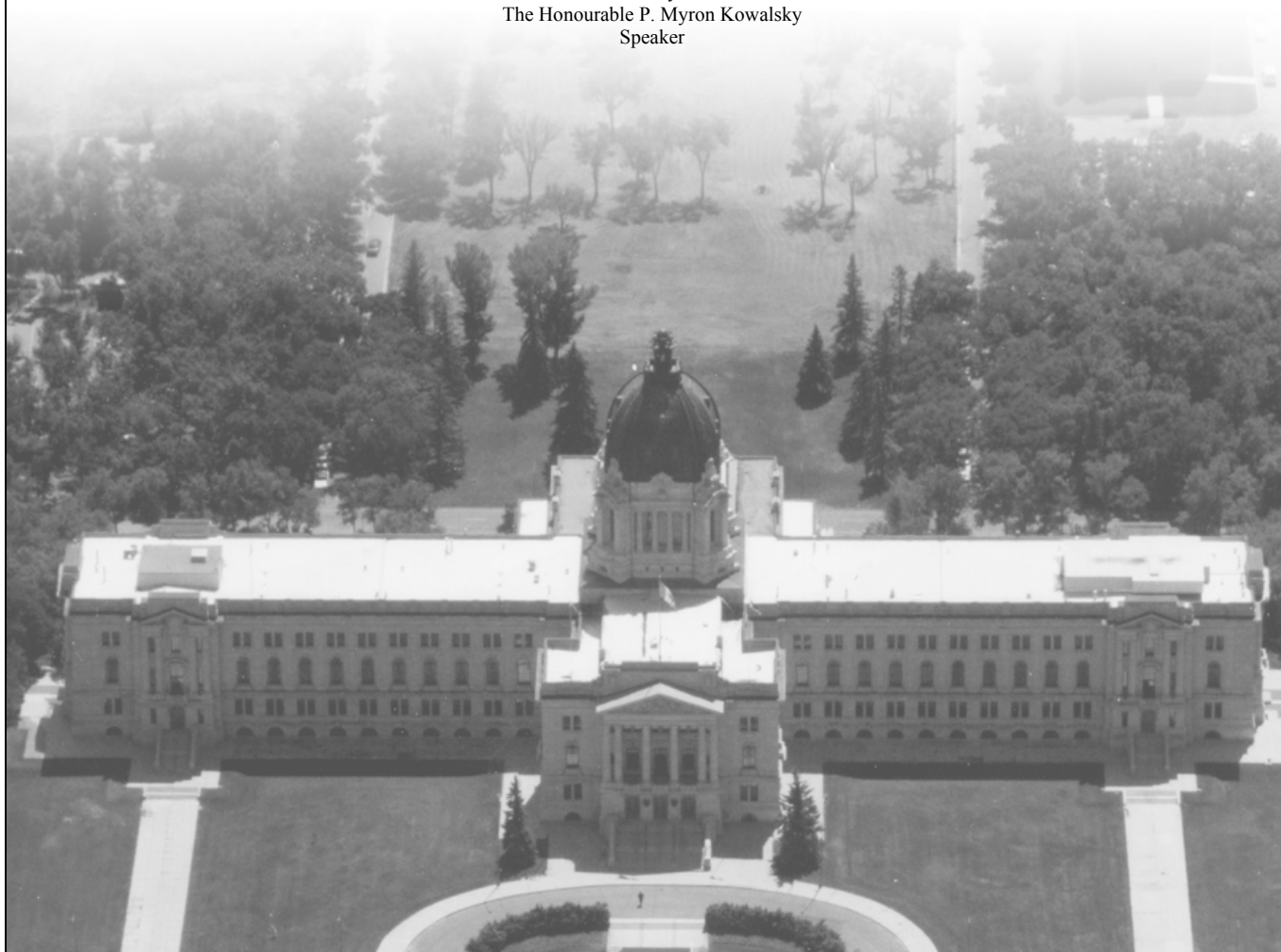
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantefoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to stand on behalf of constituents from the Cypress Hills area to present a petition related to crop insurance premium increases again this year. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by producers from the communities of Portreeve and Abbey as well as Lancer.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from residents of the Rosetown-Elrose constituency concerning recent changes to the crop insurance program that result in a large premium increase for insured farmers while overall coverage is reduced. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Rosetown, Lucky Lake, and Beechy.

And I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today in the House with a petition from citizens of southwest Saskatchewan that are concerned about the deplorable condition of Highway 43. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 43 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate growth in rural Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good folks of Gravelbourg, Bateman, Edam, and Mossbank.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition of citizens opposed to possible reductions of services at Davidson, Imperial 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 Imperial health centres be maintained at the current level of service at a minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available, as well as lab, public health, home care, long-term care services available to users from the Davidson, Imperial area and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Bladworth, Davidson, Regina, and Kenaston. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from citizens concerned about the poor cellular telephone coverage in their area. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in the regions encompassing the constituency of Biggar.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers nos. 47, 50, 63, 65, 69, and no. 72.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

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

To the Highways minister: when will the section of Highway 15 from the junction of 20 east to the junction of 6 be resurfaced or repaved?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this Assembly, 65 grade 8 students from St. Angela Merici School, who have occupied the west gallery.

St. Angela Merici School is in the northwest corner of my constituency, Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. And I'm very pleased that they're here today accompanied by Ms. Wendy Gervais, Mr. Kozine, and Mr. Chabot. And I look forward to meeting with this class later in the afternoon for some photos, a bit of discussion, and some drinks.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and all the members of this House, to join me in showing a warm welcome to these students from grade 8 at St. Angela Merici.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a number of guests sitting in the east gallery as well as in your gallery. These guests are SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) students who find themselves in quite an awkward position through absolutely no fault of their own, Mr. Speaker.

They're here to see the proceedings and hopefully see some solution and movement towards the dispute with SIAST instructors. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina South.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join with members in this House in welcoming SIAST students who are here. This is a very difficult time for them. And I can assure you that all members are certainly appreciative of their efforts in making their cause known and their position known. And I would welcome them here on behalf of the government members as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the House, I would like to introduce two of my constituents. More importantly, two friends. And maybe even before that, more importantly, two customers when I was a machinery salesman. In the east gallery today I would like to introduce Scott Morvik and his mother, Kathy Morvik, from the community of Eastend.

Scott's been very involved politically over the years but we've developed a very close working relationship. Our offices are right next door to each other in the community, and I'd like to

welcome them here today. Scott is the young man of whom I spoke in my Throne Speech, who suffered a neurological problem and was forced to go to Calgary for an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) in 24 hours. He's here today to take advantage of a medical opportunity that's been made available to him.

I'd like to have the whole Assembly welcome Scott and his mother here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure and an honour for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, members of Sons of Scotland, Camp Balmoral No. 177, seated in your gallery.

They are present today in honour of Tartan Day and to hear a fine Scottish colleague of mine make a statement about the importance and the celebratory nature of such a memorable occasion.

As I introduce them, if they could just stand and give a bit of a wave that would be great: Bob Nichols, the chief; Jack Young, past chief, with his wife, Carol Young; Norma Trim, past chief with husband, Bill Trim; Wilma Matheson, past chief, her spouse, Bill Matheson, who is also a past chief. I'm sorry, Wilma Matheson, past chief; and Bill and Wanda Matheson. And I knew that very well, Mr. Speaker, because I also know their son, Danny, who was here piping with the band this morning which echoed through the building and had many people come out to witness the piping.

Also Howard Love and John MacLeod. Members will recognize John as a friend, but not too often have we had a chance to see him dressed in the Scottish kilt and all.

So we ask all members to join with us in giving us a warm welcome to the Sons of Scotland, Camp Balmoral, members #177.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine who is sitting in your gallery, Jennifer Wilcock.

Jennifer is a U of R (University of Regina) student in the Faculty of Education and majoring in honours English. And Jennifer is now seeking some summer employment and I'll be talking to her after the Assembly, after question period.

So I would ask members of the Assembly to please welcome Jennifer to her legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased and honoured to introduce to you and through you to the legislature, Dr. Deborah Parker-Loewen, who is in the Speaker's gallery. She is the Children's Advocate for the province of Saskatchewan, an officer of this legislature, who does valuable work for the children of this province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with the Minister of Justice in welcoming Ms. Parker-Loewen and her staff who have joined us this afternoon. As you know, Ms. Parker-Loewen has just come out with a report regarding children and mental health in the province. And we certainly welcome her and thank her for the work that she has done in this regard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleagues in recognizing some of our guests here today — the Mathesons.

Bill will remember many years ago — many, many years ago now — in a small town, Woodrow, Saskatchewan, when we could peer across the street at each other because Bill's mother was my neighbour, and I must tell members of the Legislative Assembly she was one of most generous ladies come Halloween Eve. She helped to celebrate very well and there was always lots at Mrs. Matheson's place. So welcome, Bill. Talk to you later.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Tartan Day

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, in 1992 in this Assembly, a private member's Bill was passed that provided a day of official appreciation for the Scottish clans in Saskatchewan, and I'm happy to report that today is Tartan Day.

Mr. Speaker, Tartan Day was established to acknowledge the Scots of Saskatchewan and their notable accomplishments. One such fellow was Tommy Douglas. And if you look at the roll call of members who have served this Assembly since 1905, you will see MacDonalds, McInnis, McIntyres, McIntoshes, and so on. I, and others in this Chamber, are proud to add to that roll.

And I'm also especially proud today, Mr. Speaker, to be wearing a fine tie of the Wilson tartan, the tartan of the clan of my grandmother, Olive.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today we welcomed the Sons of Scotland Benevolent Association to the legislature to celebrate Tartan Day with pipes and drums. And if you didn't see it, you certainly heard it, Mr. Speaker. And we welcome them again to these proceedings. The Sons of Scotland have been in existence in Canada since 1876 and they do a bonny job of preserving and promoting Scottish culture in Canada. They're proudly Scottish and proudly Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, we today recognize the ongoing contributions and influence that our Scottish citizens have had on our province. It is worth mentioning that even our first premier was named Scott. And curling, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's official sport — that too was brought to us by the Scots.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Sons of Scotland Benevolent Association and congratulate them all — them and all Saskatchewan citizens of Scottish heritage. In the words of Robbie Burns on this day and all days, "may we be blessed with health and peace and sweet content." Slainté, m'hath, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, today, April 6, is Tartan Day in Saskatchewan and I ask all members of the House to join me in sending out our best wishes to those who are of Scottish descent and, of course, those who wish they were of Scottish descent, and that would include all of the others.

Mr. Speaker, as many members of this House will know it was the former member from Kindersley, Bill Boyd, who introduced the private member's Bill more than a decade ago to officially recognize the many contributions of the Scottish settlers that came to our great province to start a new life for themselves and their families. In fact at that time, Saskatchewan was one of three provinces who had chosen to officially mark April 6 as Tartan Day, a day that was chosen by the Federation of Scottish Clans in Nova Scotia.

(13:45)

Now some might say that Mr. Boyd had an ulterior motive for doing this, not only being a politician, but of Scottish descent himself. But we all know that there are many of us on both sides of the House who can trace our ancestry back to the Scots. There are also many of us who are rightly proud and honoured to be of Celtic descent and we don't mind letting others know about it either, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today to help mark Tartan Day in Saskatchewan, we had the pleasure of listening to the pipes and drums of the Sons of Scotland Benevolent Association perform here in the legislative rotunda and what a glorious sound they made, Mr. Speaker. They stir our very soul.

I ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing Tartan

Day in Saskatchewan, and to celebrate the many successes and contributions of our Scottish ancestors. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Saskatoon Photographer Wins Five Awards

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to offer congratulations to Shannon Brunner from my constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin.

Ms. Brunner, a professional photographer and the owner of NY Snaps Inc. in Saskatoon, took home five of the top awards in the recent provincial professional photography competition, including Photographer of the Year.

Mr. Speaker, the Photographer of the Year Award goes to the professional whose salon entry of four photographs receives the highest aggregate score and is judged as most artistic in the exhibition. Judges for the competition are professional photographers from outside the province. Ms. Brunner also won best child portrait, best fine art photo, and the Kodak Gallery Award for best portrait and best general portrait.

Mr. Speaker, Shannon Brunner is also being recognized for her high-quality work outside Saskatchewan. One of her greeting cards is a finalist in this year's North American Greeting Card Association competition, a competition that draws over 1,300 entries from 181 countries worldwide.

It should also be noted, Mr. Speaker, that Shannon Brunner is not only a first rate photographer, but she's also president of the Saskatchewan Professional Photographers Association.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating Ms. Brunner on her accomplishments as a photographer, and on her contributions to Saskatchewan's continuing tradition of excellence. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Passing of Bill Hodgins

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with regret that I stand here today to bid farewell to an outstanding Saskatchewan citizen and former constituent of Melfort.

On April 4, 2004, Bill Hodgins passed away in the Regina General Hospital at 77 years of age. Bill was born in Birch Hills on February 16, 1927 and grew up on the family farm. He farmed in Domremy, Saskatchewan from 1952 to '65. Then he opened Bill Hodgins Auction Centre in Melfort, a very successful and dynamic auction service, which he later sold to his son, Grant Hodgins, who is a former member of this Assembly.

Bill semi-retired for a few years but then got the itch to open another auction centre in Regina in 2000, on Highway 6 just

immediately at the north end of the city.

Those of us who knew Bill knew that he couldn't sit still. He worked enthusiastically until his passing. He loved to travel and worked extremely hard to find the time to travel. On one of these trips he came back with the brainstorm of starting Billy's Barn in Melfort as a part of the grounds at the auction centre, and it was a very engaging and expensive hobby of his.

He was also an avid follower of Saskatchewan politics. Mr. Speaker, Bill Hodgins was much more than a constituent and a supporter. He was a man who was a mentor and a friend and whose word was his bond.

On behalf of the official opposition and all members of this Assembly, I would ask that we convey our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to the Hodgins family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

International Order of the Daughters of the Empire 90th Provincial Meeting

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend I and the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow had the pleasure and honour of attending the IODE's (International Order of the Daughters of the Empire) 90th provincial annual meeting.

Mr. Speaker, the first Saskatchewan chapter of the IODE was founded in Battleford in 1909. Since then, the women of IODE have voluntarily given their time, commitment, and support to helping the less fortunate.

In Saskatchewan there are 11 IODE chapters with a total membership of 156 women. Through educational, social service, and citizen programs, IODE members work to improve the quality of life for Saskatchewan women, children, and families. Their contributions range from scholarships and bursaries to music festival awards and donations for many kinds of activities in schools and camps throughout the province. Civics is also a very important part of their agenda and their desire to contribute to civil society.

Mr. Speaker, members of IODE spend many hours performing community service work and fundraising activities. They are homemakers, teachers, secretaries, nurses, retired women, lawyers, and businesswomen, and they go about their work in a very quiet and modest fashion.

I believe that it's important we recognize the impact their work has had on improving the quality of life for those most in need.

I ask all members to join me in acknowledging the IODE's 90 years of community involvement, and I thank its members for their dedication to the people of this province.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Strike at the Saskatchewan Institute
of Applied Science and Technology**

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is the 14th day of the strike affecting SIAST, and thousands of students are worried about losing credit for their year's work.

Many students have course requirements to complete and should be writing their final exams right now, but instead they watch as their instructors walk the picket lines and they worry about their finances for an extended school year. The strike is very disappointing for both students and parents, and they hope, as do members of the official opposition, that an agreement will be reached in the near future.

In today's *Leader-Post*, the Learning minister is quoted as saying that:

... setbacks are part of the process that sometimes occurs in contract negotiations.

And he's right. But only an irresponsible employer would delay negotiating until the contract has expired, putting the workers in a legal strike position that disrupts services. Only an irresponsible government would jeopardize students completing their course requirements for the year because it refused to give the negotiating team a mandate to do its job.

How did contract negotiations break down? Well, Mr. Speaker, it's apparent that this NDP (New Democratic Party) government has given the SIAST instructors the same empty promises it gave to the rest of the province. The NDP promises this and delivers that. And soon everyone in our province will suffer for the mismanagement of this NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

**Canadian Blind Sports Association
National Goalball Championships**

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to attend the awards banquet for the Cameco Canadian Blind Sports Association National Goalball Championships. The Saskatchewan Blind Sports Association hosted the championship in Saskatoon just this past weekend.

Mr. Speaker, the SBSA (Saskatchewan Blind Sports Association) is a volunteer-based, not-for-profit organization that facilitates provincial, national, and international sports opportunities for Saskatchewan residents who are legally blind or visually impaired.

Goalball is a team sport that has three characteristics distinguishing it from ball games played by sighted people. The ball is audible when in motion so players can track it by sound. The court has tactile markings so players can orient themselves by touch. And finally, eyeshades are worn to completely limit the sight of all players.

Mr. Speaker, this national championship was partly in preparation for the Paralympic Games being held in Athens this coming summer, where the Canadian women's team will be defending the gold medal they currently hold. And I'm pleased to say that one of the players on that Canadian women's team will be Amy Alsop from Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all my colleagues will join me in congratulating Amy for being chosen to represent her country at the Athens games, as well as in congratulating all the participants of the national goalball championships.

I also want to thank the volunteers, organizers, and sponsors of the championships, especially Cameco, for providing this opportunity for Canadian and Saskatchewan athletes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Reaction to Decisions Made in Budget

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. The NDP is keeping the parks closed to save \$100,000, but then they realized they sent out thousands of campground guides that are now incorrect because the NDP are keeping the parks closed, to save \$100,000. So now the minister says the government will have to spend thousands of dollars to print an amendment to the book, and run possibly more advertising to correct the campground guides which are now inaccurate, because the NDP closed the parks to save \$100,000. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, here's an idea; how about keep the parks open? Will he make that commitment today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that we've tabled a very challenging budget that asked all departments to make the most of their budgets. We have our goals for our government and they are very clear. We set out a clear agenda.

I do want to say though that within Environment the decisions we made were not taken easily or made lightly. But we are talking to people about this issue. It's one that seems to have resonated with people, and we're getting that feedback, and we're talking to stakeholders and that's very important.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's not dissimilar to what the minister said yesterday. The minister said, quite happily, that people were talking now about the parks in the province of Saskatchewan, and he went on to say that the government was going to be listening to what they had to say, but they had no intention of responding to what it is that people had to say.

In fact, here's a quote — here's a quote — here's what he said:

What we really want to do is make sure people have the idea that we're listening.

Mr. Speaker, that's what he said. And there it is. The NDP want to make sure that people have the idea that they're listening, have the idea that they care about the issues they are raising. Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier: what is the point of listening if you've said you're going to ignore what you hear?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, we are listening and we will continue to listen to people. We want to hear the good ideas that people have. The goal before us is to save the money to keep our parks open this summer. And it's very important that we have a strong and vibrant parks system. This is a key part to our parks. And so Mr. Speaker, we will continue to listen to the people, and I will speak with people and get their feedback and add that all into the mix. And we'll have a wonderful season this summer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister, if he's changing his position from yesterday, he should say so. If he's now saying that they're prepared to listen, and potentially change the decision, he should say that because yesterday he was clear, he said they were going to be listening to the people of the province. But he ruled out making any changes, Mr. Speaker.

And that explains much of the Premier's election platform. The Premier wants people to have the idea that he's interested in their issues. He wants them to have the idea that he may cut taxes. And that's what he said during the campaign. He wanted people to believe they had the idea that they would cut taxes when all along he was planning on raising taxes.

So that's the question to the Premier. Isn't that the case, isn't that the plan of this NDP government, that people would have the idea that he cares about this province, that he wants to reduce taxes, when all along his plans are exactly the opposite?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, by virtue of the Throne Speech delivered in this House, by virtue of the budget now under debate in the House, the people of Saskatchewan can see very, very clearly the vision and the direction of this government.

It is a vision and a direction, Mr. Speaker, that is in tune with the desires and the direction of the people of Saskatchewan. It is a direction which says we are going to build a green and prosperous economy; we are going to provide the best quality public health care that we can; and we are going to open this province up for its future generations, Mr. Speaker. That is the

direction, that is the commitment, and that is what you're seeing today, and the people of Saskatchewan are seeing today, in this Throne Speech and in this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's true I think that the Premier also wanted people in the last election to have the idea that he had any commitment at all to health care in this province. It doesn't matter that the NDP in Saskatchewan have presided over the longest waiting lists in the province; it apparently doesn't matter that they're prepared to close more beds — in fact, long-term care beds — so long as people have the idea that the NDP is committed to health care.

Mr. Speaker, for 28 days that Premier travelled the province and looked people in the eye and made promises he apparently had no intention of keeping. When, when can the people of this province expect that Premier to start telling the truth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition members want to rerun the election of last year. I'm very willing to rerun that election any day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition says today again, as they tried to do in the campaign by using name calling and all of that kind of diversionary technique . . . Mr. Speaker, right before us we have a budget and a Throne Speech under debate with a positive direction and a positive future for Saskatchewan and its people. What we do not have, what we do not have in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, is any kind of a contribution of substance from the opposition.

What we get day after day after day is the spend more, spend more, spend more, tax less, tax less, tax less opposition. It's the same thing we've heard for the last three and four years in this House, Mr. Speaker. I invite the Leader of the Opposition, if he has positive ideas — whether it be in health or in environment — if he would just stand on his feet and share at least one of those ideas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, well the Premier now has a choice. The Premier can, for example, if he's true to his word, support the legislation brought forward by the member for Saskatoon Southeast on whistleblowers legislation. He can accept our suggestion that he cancel and stop ridiculous ads like this to the federal government on equalization and keep the parks open in the province of Saskatchewan. He can do that.

Mr. Speaker, in the last election the Premier also wanted seniors

to believe that, to have the idea that he cared about them, and we see this budget close long-term care beds. We see this budget increase the fees for things like hearing aids. He wants people to have the idea that he cares about seniors, the idea that he'll reduce taxes. I ask the Premier again this question, when can Saskatchewan people expect him to start telling the truth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite waves around here today the copy of an ad by which we are informing the people of Saskatchewan of one of the most significant issues facing this province and that's the matter of equalization, waves that around and they criticize it, Mr. Speaker. They criticize it.

Well maybe he wants to explain about the public dollars that are funding the ads that he's running these days and what contribution to public policy those are providing, Mr. Speaker.

This is a government yes, Mr. Speaker, that has ideas about the future of this province and this is a government that is taking those ideas and turning them into reality with constructive, sometimes difficult, and sometimes tough decision-making, but with constructive decision-making that will take this province forward, that will make this province ready for its next generation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, if those ads achieve their aim, Mr. Speaker, if those ads achieve their aim, it will do more to . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. Order. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, if those ads achieve their aim, they will result in the end of this government, Mr. Speaker, and the cancellation of that budget. I can think of no other greater service we could do for the province of Saskatchewan than that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, every summer the Premier loads up his bus with all of the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and they travel rural Saskatchewan because they'd like rural Saskatchewan to believe . . . to have the idea that they care.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, we see them close rural service centres. We see higher crop insurance premiums from this government; we see no move on rural tax issue; higher costs for farm fuel. He wants them to have the idea that . . . that he cares but his actions, Mr. Speaker, belie . . . or his words belie the fact. Once again to the Premier of this province, is it his intention just to have people believe that he cares, to have the idea that he cares, or will he start being straight with the taxpayers of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, he talks about ideas. Here's an idea of support for rural Saskatchewan: the Department of Agriculture's budget in this budget, in this budget under debate, has had the second largest increase percentage of any department in government, Mr. Speaker. That is a commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

In this budget we are debating expenditures in the highways and roadways of Saskatchewan at record levels again, Mr. Speaker. In this budget, we are debating the new revenue-sharing dollars that go to the small villages and towns of rural Saskatchewan, to the rural municipalities of rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's taking an idea in some very tough budgetary times and turning it into a reality for the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he talks about the ads and the intention of those ads. Clearly he has identified his ads that are running are clearly partisan ads. That's clearly what he's identified in this House. And I'd ask the Leader of the Opposition how he can justify using public dollars to run that kind of a partisan campaign.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier neglects to say that for 10 years in a row they cut the Ag budget and finally put a little more back in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, when you least expect it, a couple of NDP MLAs actually tell the truth. The Finance minister says the NDP kept its plan to raise taxes secret during the election because tax increases are unpopular. And now the Environment minister says the NDP wants to make sure people have the idea they're listening, even though they aren't.

Today the mayor of Melville, Mr. Speaker, is speaking out about an NDP plan to cut services in Melville's brand new hospital. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Health really listening? Or does he just want people of Melville to think that they're listening? Will the minister make a clear commitment today that no services will be cut at Melville's brand new hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I've answered many questions about the budget that we're bringing forward this year. There's no, no hiding the fact that there are going to be some changes and some reforms and some things that need to be done.

All of the RHAs (regional health authority) received their

budget amounts last week on Wednesday. They are now working through in their regions what kinds of things they can do, what kinds of things that they will be changing. And we will get that information in the next two to three weeks and work at how we can provide a Saskatchewan-wide perspective.

That's exactly what I said. And that's what I have to say again today. They're looking at everything that's being done, and that's how this process works.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — What a track record, Mr. Speaker. They build a brand new hospital in Melville for the election to try and save a seat for themselves, and one year later they're already cutting services and beds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Melville, Wilf Rieger, said he received a letter from the Sunrise Health Region warning that service cuts may be on the way at Melville's hospital. Now it's hard to imagine even the NDP government, as incompetent and alienated from the truth as the NDP, would build that new hospital and then turn around and make these cuts instantly; unless maybe of course, as I said, it's election year out there one year ago and it was an election ploy.

Mr. Speaker, all Mayor Rieger and the people of Melville want the NDP to do is reintroduce themselves to the concept of telling the truth. Will the minister assure the people of Melville that no services at the Melville hospital will be cut this year? Will the minister make that commitment, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's curious that the member opposite should talk about saving seats given the history of how he got back into this legislature. And we all, we all know about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are working on a health budget which has a \$160 million increase; the largest increase in the budgets of any of the departments in government. And our job is to make sure we use all those dollars in the most effective way possible.

Melville has a very good facility which is providing good services for that area and for the whole eastern side of Saskatchewan. And I know that the people who are working and planning will make sure that everything is being used to their best use possible. That's what we all have to do in every part of our province because that's how Saskatchewan people do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll

enlighten the Health minister. I got back here by getting about 650 more votes than his candidate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. The Premier went around this province last summer . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. The Premier went around the province last summer pretending to listen to the concerns of rural municipalities. The RMs (rural municipality) were telling the NDP in the clearest of language, education tax relief was their number one priority. And the Premier told RMs he was listening. Then the NDP brought in a budget that is absolutely nothing to relieve the property tax burden on RMs while at the same time raising the PST (provincial sales tax) by \$135 million. Mr. Speaker, raising the PST drives up the costs for every municipality in this province.

Mr. Speaker, my question: how much new tax revenue will the NDP collect from rural municipalities this year as a result of the Premier's decision to not handle education tax on property, rather change and raise the PST by 1 per cent?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think all members are aware that in this budget there's \$28 million for municipalities and school boards to help take pressure off the property tax increases.

I understand what the member is saying. I certainly hear this from rural municipalities about concern for their particular sector in terms of the . . . what they see to be their share of the burden for paying for education. I can tell the member that we are working through a number of options to deal with that, but this budget contains solid, solid options including \$28 million more for municipalities and school boards to help offset those pressures.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that that \$28 million will last till about August. Then school divisions are on their own, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it looks like the Environment minister was being honest yesterday when he said the NDP wants to make sure people have the idea that they're listening, even though they aren't. The Premier wants people to think the NDP are listening to their concerns about health care in Melville, even though they actually aren't. And the Premier wants rural taxpayers to

think the NDP will take action to reduce property taxes, even though this NDP government has actually decided to increase taxes and charge municipalities more.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier promise to reduce property tax burden on RMs during the election and not deal with it, and then raise the PST and drive up costs for municipalities across this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, let's make sure that we understand very clearly what we are discussing; that was a question about how we fund education. That is the discussion that legislators must turn their attention to: how do we fund education?

Now the members opposite stood in this House and for . . . almost every single day until the budget came down, introduced petitions saying, whatever you do, don't introduce the sales tax on restaurant meals which was a core component of the Boughen report. Now they come up and they stand up in this House, as does the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood who said in his local paper, whatever you do, you got to implement that Boughen Commission report.

Which is it? It can't be both. The issue that we have in front of us is how we find an appropriate amount of money to make sure that the school system provides the best possible services available. That's what this government is committed to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Policy Regarding Volume Discount for Beer Sales

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is one question in this province, and that question is about the credibility and the honesty of this Premier, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for Saskatchewan liquor and gaming corporation. Today the private beer sale vendors in Saskatchewan are finding out about another secret, hidden tax increase in the NDP's budget. That's because on last Wednesday, budget day, the NDP revoked the discount vendors receive on packaged beer sales. That means, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP government just picked the pocket of most hotel and tavern owners in Saskatchewan, especially those in urban Saskatchewan.

We spoke to two hotel owners in Moose Jaw this morning, and they estimated the NDP's tax grab will mean between 60 and \$70,000 off of their bottom line. Another hotel owner in Estevan estimates it's going to cost him \$200,000, Mr. Speaker. Why is the NDP picking the pockets of Saskatchewan hotel and tavern owners that are struggling to survive in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and

Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to first advise the House that the discount policy with respect to beer has been changed. It has not been revoked as the member just said. It has been changed, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also tell the House, Mr. Speaker, there are six provinces in this country who give no discount to beer purchases by hotels. I want to tell the House and that member, Mr. Speaker, that the policy of this government will give a discount to purchases of beer for off-sale on the first \$100,000 in purchases of beer, Mr. Speaker.

It is true that we're not going to be discounting above \$100,000. Six provinces have no discount at all, Mr. Speaker, but we are dealing with large-volume beer sellers who make good money selling beer. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that although this will transfer \$5 million for health and education and highways, Mr. Speaker, the hoteliers have gained \$35.9 million in VLT (video lottery terminal) fees, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, hotel owners and tavern owners across Saskatchewan are outraged about this hidden tax increase — and not a single word of consultation with them, Mr. Speaker. And the NDP revoked the discount last Wednesday on budget day. That means, Mr. Speaker, hotels, taverns, restaurant owners who have over \$100,000 in beer sales a year will no longer receive the volume discount between \$1.10 and \$1.65 a dozen. And that will mean dozens of small businesses will have to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars this year, Mr. Speaker.

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, the NDP raise taxes, shorten summer, break most of its election promises — it's enough to drive you to drink, but even then the government makes money, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister immediately re-establish the volume discount on beer sales and sit down with the hoteliers and the tavern owners and other private beer sale vendors before making changes to the discount structure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the contradiction is apparent in the member's very question. The member just said this would drive small businesses out of business. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we heard already that this applies to large businesses, not small, because there is no change for small businesses, Mr. Speaker. There is no change for 240 hoteliers largely in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because they receive a discount on the first \$100,000 in their purchases.

The member is correct only when he says there are some quite large businesses who will not receive a discount, as they do not in other provinces as well, Mr. Speaker. And we are transferring

those funds, Mr. Speaker, to health, education, and highways.

And I want to add, Mr. Speaker, that the off-sale community in Saskatchewan has in recent years benefited to the tune of \$35.9 million new money from VLTs and now has the right to sell spirits as well, Mr. Speaker. They are not suffering.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the benefit of the liquor sales across Saskatchewan has been mainly for the government in the fact that they've increased the taxation by an additional 3 per cent on the liquor consumption tax.

Mr. Speaker, if the government was to rescind their discount policy — what they have just done — they would receive virtually the same amount of money back because of the liquor consumption tax and the PST charges on the additional charges over the cost from the Liquor Board store, and it would maintain jobs and keep those businesses going in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the government sit down with their partners in the liquor industry, the private vendors, and negotiate a mutually satisfactory deal rather than just pretending to listen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, one minute we hear from the opposition that we're attacking rural Saskatchewan; the next minute they get up and complain because we have a policy that protects the smaller businesses in rural Saskatchewan but takes back \$5 million from the largest businesses to put money into health, education, and highways, Mr. Speaker.

And what that member just said, Mr. Speaker, is not true. It is not true that if you gave the \$5 million back to those large businesses that you would still have that money for health care, education, and transportation. Mr. Speaker, you would not.

We made a choice that the discount, which as I said is not even offered in six provinces, would be kept for smaller businesses, not the largest businesses, and that that extra revenue, Mr. Speaker, would go to support health, education, and highways, Mr. Speaker — things that benefit rural Saskatchewan. And I'm surprised at the contrary, contradictory positions being taken by the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Commitments Made During Election Campaign

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of the province are surprised that this government is just wanting to give them the idea that they're listening. We're surprised, Mr. Speaker, that

this Premier, who had campaigned for 28 days, looked people dead in the eye and made promises he had no intention of keeping.

He wants us to have the idea that he's cutting taxes, the idea that he won't fire government workers, the idea that we'll have the lowest utility rates when none of it is true. The idea that the budget is balanced; he wants us to have that. The idea that there may be an ethanol plant in Belle Plaine.

Mr. Speaker, if this Premier tells you good morning, you better check your watch because the bottom line is this Premier continues to break promises to the people of the province. And he ought to stand up, he ought to stand up for the people of the province and explain how he could look them dead in the eye and make promises and continue to make promises he has no intention of keeping.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I will look the citizens of Saskatchewan in the eye and present to them the Throne Speech vision, the budget vision, the platform that we built this on, any day of any week, any hour of any day.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me just say this. The formation of public policy in this legislature is not going to be achieved by cute one-liners. It's going to be achieved by men and women struggling with the tough and difficult, sometimes the tough and difficult decisions that we have to make, Mr. Speaker.

But this province, this legislature and its people, would be aided by an opposition who instead of daily commuting to the House and just complaining about, complaining about a level of taxation and yet saying we need to spend more money with no new ideas, Mr. Speaker, we need an opposition that will for once come forward with a new idea — a new approach to health care, a new approach to the environment, a new approach to dealing with some of the real challenges of our province.

And let's just stop fighting the November election and get on with governing on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, before orders of the day, I wish to put on record that I earlier today have tabled a report from the child's advocate dated April 2004.

Why is the member from Melfort on his feet?

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Melfort has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce four very special guests who are here today in the gallery opposite. They're members of Bill Hodgins's family: Mr. Ken Hodgins, Donna Hodgins, Rankin Hodgins, and Daphne Hodgins.

Mr. Speaker, they were here to observe the statement about the condolences of the Hodgins family on the passing of their friend and family member, Bill. And they also will be travelling with many of us, I'm sure, up to Melfort on Saturday for the funeral for Mr. Bill Hodgins at 2 o'clock.

We would like to ask the Assembly to welcome these guests in our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 59 through 62 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 59, 60, 61, and 62 have been submitted.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen, that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Krawetz.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney, the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon as I enter the budget debate I'd first like to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. It's a rare opportunity to have a Speaker re-elected anywhere in the Commonwealth and I understand this is the first time in our province's history. And I'd also like to thank the member for Regina Wascana Plains for putting her name forward and standing as a candidate for that position as well.

I would also like to take this opportunity, as it's my first time speaking since the election, to welcome all the members on both sides of the House back to this Assembly. I think that there is no greater call that any citizen can put forward than to serve the people of this province. And I thank each and every one of you for putting your names forward and thank you on behalf of your constituents and all of us.

Mr. Speaker, today we are dealing with a budget that the people of Saskatchewan will judge. Mr. Speaker, they will judge this budget based on the choices that the people of this province know and understand had to be made.

This is a difficult budget that needed to make . . . that forced the government to make difficult choices. But we had to respond to the key priorities of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, and the Saskatchewan people told us fundamentally on every doorstep in this province that health care and education were their priorities. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget responds to those priorities.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a budget about choice. It's a budget about moving forward with the people of Saskatchewan's priorities in mind. Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that builds for our future, that puts our young people first, and puts our priorities clear and in the forefront for people to judge.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time this budget preserves for us the most affordable cost of living in the country. Mr. Speaker, when comparing the 10 cities across Canada, including the city of Saskatoon, Saskatoon again delivers the most affordable package of taxes and cost of living for a two-income family making \$50,000 in the entire country.

Mr. Speaker, this budget preserves Saskatchewan as a true place of opportunity for young people to raise a family, to build a business, to find a job, where their income can buy them things that it can't in other places in Canada, Mr. Speaker. This is a budget — although difficult choices had to be made — that builds for a future economic base, that will build our province from beyond its current parameters to an even brighter future. And, Mr. Speaker, for all these reasons, for all these reasons, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Why is the member from Saskatoon Sutherland on his feet?

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Sutherland has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to draw attention to the person that's sitting in your gallery. Her name is Joanne Harpauer-Digneau, and she has been working as my legislative intern, part of the Saskatchewan legislative internship program. She's one of the young, up-and-coming young people that are working hard. And this is the first opportunity I've had a chance to introduce her in the House. And our time is coming to an end as of next week, and then she'll be working with, I think, the member for Canora-Pelly.

So I'd ask all hon. members to welcome Joanne to the

Chamber.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Krawetz.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, this budget preserves for Saskatchewan people that a two-income family of \$50,000 still is living in the most affordable province in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, on that \$50,000 in Saskatchewan you can afford to buy a home, you can afford to raise your children, you can afford to do many things you can't do in other parts of this country.

And we have to keep that in mind, Mr. Speaker. This is also a province that has put priorities forward for those who are less fortunate. This is a province that sets its priorities, trying to ensure that in all cases the amount of money in your pocketbook doesn't determine the level of services you get in health care or in education.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget about people and for people. And for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I think it should be abundantly clear that I will support the Throne Speech and the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and not the amendment made by the opposition. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise again on behalf of the good people of Saskatoon Northwest and speak to a motion before this House.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health yesterday quoted several books that I should read. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to return the favour. The book, Mr. Speaker, is called, breaking your promise. It's written by the member from Riversdale and the NDP, printed and paid for by the people of Saskatchewan. I will also provide a tutor to the minister because I'm sure he's having trouble understanding it.

Mr. Speaker, as I read the budget, Mr. Speaker, one question kept coming again and again — where are the needs of the people met in this NDP government budget? Where are the people?

Mr. Speaker, this government preaches that the future is wide open while continuing to try to lower everyone's expectations.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, who was it that created this financial disaster? Who took a \$500 million surplus and turned it into a \$1.5 billion loss? Not the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. How many times do the people of this province have to dig into their pockets to bail this government out of its mismanagement?

These hard economic times were created by the government who, upon its election, set out to grow government like it was the 1960s. And grow government, Mr. Speaker, they did. And now it's time to pay the piper, so where does the government go? They go to the people of Saskatchewan with increased taxes. The very people who elected them to solve the problems must once again bail them out.

Mr. Speaker, where are the people in the NDP tax hikes? An increase in PST, a tax hike that has never mentioned in the recent election. A tax hike to fund the government economic disaster created by this NDP government. A tax hike that drives business from our borders and crushes the hopes of our citizens, especially our young people. A tax hike that has no end, has no plan, and simply continues the NDP legacy of spend like mad and tax like crazy.

Every time I listen, Mr. Speaker, to a news conference, I hear not only the Premier but all his ministers justifying the tax hikes by saying there are only two ways to solve a problem that they created: raise taxes or cut programs.

How about a third option, Mr. Speaker, something foreign to this government? How about growing the province and the economy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, under the NDP our pockets are wide open, not our province. Mr. Speaker, where are the people in this NDP tax hikes? From what I can see, the people are continuing to pay for the NDP inability to manage their own affairs.

I looked at the NDP budget plan to delay the opening of provincial parks and tax the family campfire, and I've looked for where the people are in this initiative. What I see are students that need to be employed in these parks denied one month of salary. I encourage them to look elsewhere to fund their post-secondary education.

All too often, Mr. Speaker, they look west. The \$100,000 saved by this NDP initiative will be lost again and again by the departure of more and more young people.

The business communities that surround the parks could lose up to one-third of their revenue. What will be the cost, Mr. Speaker, of the cleanup over the long weekend should vandalism occur in these parks? What and where is the logic in it? Where are the people in these NDP parks policy? Mr. Speaker, the people are leaving.

The NDP are spending more on health care. My party's commitment to health care is absolute, but we believe the answers lie in more than just cutting another cheque. We believe that we should listen to our professionals, not fire them if they disagree with you.

We have seen in the past weeks a long line of people who have gone to the NDP health care system with legitimate needs, life-threatening needs. They've been left on waiting lists, they've been ignored, and sadly, the NDP seems to have no plan to help them—more studies, more lists, less services, and less solutions. The NDP cheer the increase in spending, which would make more sense if they could show shorter waiting lists, more professionals, a growing number of nurses, if they were showing an increase in the number of people coming to this province versus leaving this province.

We could agree if the NDP showed any ability to achieve results. Ah, Mr. Speaker, results—a concept not familiar with this government. The people want results, Mr. Speaker, not excuses.

They would have the people of Saskatchewan believe that we're the only province that has BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), droughts, forest fires. No, Mr. Speaker, we're the only province that is losing population—25,000 since this administration took over.

Mr. Speaker, the question is, are the NDP running out of excuses because they've stopped delivering on results long ago? Where are the people in the NDP health care budget, Mr. Speaker? The people are waiting.

Let's look for a moment, Mr. Speaker, at the NDP debt in this budget of despair and see if we can find the people in it. When the current Premier took over office, the provincial budget showed a surplus of some \$500 million. Debt was being reduced, and there was no fiscal fantasies like the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Since his time at the reins, we have seen massive deficits, a huge increase in the provincial debt, and a new mortgage placed on our children's future.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's debt is almost \$20 billion. At the current level, it looks like it will take about 100 years to pay off the debt. Congratulations, Mr. Premier. As our centennial year approaches, you have created another legacy—our centennial debt—because that's how long it will take us to pay it back.

But if somehow you could just possibly find a way not to spend every cent the people give you, if somehow you could find a way to generate a surplus of just \$100 million a year and apply it to our debt, Mr. Speaker, this would reduce our payback time to just 60 years. I won't see it. I'm not sure if you will, Mr. Speaker. But maybe our grandchildren will.

An Hon. Member:—You will.

Mr. Merriman:—Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, there's an ominous impact of the NDP debt. We're dancing with the devil when it comes to the annual interest rate costs. If the interest rate rises just by one half of 1 per cent in the next year, our interest costs will increase by \$100

million in the year.

Mr. Speaker, should this happen—and I pray it doesn't—how will the NDP pay the banks that have been floating them year after year? Will they close more hospitals? Will they put more seniors on the street? Will they close the parks completely?

Mr. Speaker, this is a massive threat to the stability of our province. The NDP has created a situation where, through tax and spend, our ability to fund our most basic services is threatened. Mr. Speaker, where are the people in this NDP debt plan? The people are frightened. So there we have it, Mr. Speaker. When we look at the people in the NDP budget, we find that people are paying, that people are leaving, that people are waiting, and that people are frightened.

Mr. Speaker, the food bank in Saskatoon cannot go into its rainy day fund to assist with longer and longer lines of people needing emergency assistance. They have no Fiscal Stabilization Fund. They can only go to this government, who let them down. These people are the poorest of our citizens. And yet people like Bob Pringle, former Social Services ministers have to go to big businesses and citizens more and more to make up the deficiencies of this government. What's in this budget, Mr. Speaker, for the single mother, the homeless, the seniors, and our Aboriginal youth? They will tell us there's lots in this budget for these groups. And then why, Mr. Speaker, are the people crying out, crying out for help? We hear them. Why can't they?

As a member opposite enjoyed pointing out, I'm new to the House, and I'm new to the rules of the House. I'm new to the language of the House. And I respect those who have been here before to try to do their part for our province. However, Mr. Speaker, new here but maybe I bring something else over time has been lost by the members opposite—a clear view of what is happening, unclouded by the thrust of party or debate.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has created a ticking time bomb. Our debt and the attendant interest are choking out the future of every person in the province. The Premier and his group of sorcerer apprentices have ignored the path of fiscal prudence and piled debt on top of excuses and covered all with a patina of fear.

What I find incredible, Mr. Speaker, is this: despite collecting more money than ever before, the NDP still can't balance the budget. So in addition to collecting more money than ever before and now despite closing hospitals, long-term beds, despite a potential increase in electrical rates, despite forgetting our less fortunate, despite tax increases, despite rural devastation—they still can't balance the budget.

They appear, Mr. Speaker, to have a voracious appetite for cash but no ability to deliver on results. They have taxed and spent for the last three years. And what do you have to show for it? Waiting lists out of control, continued out-migration, collapsing infrastructure, and more people in despair. Mr. Speaker, I looked for the people in this budget, and all I've seen is an out-of-touch government playing games with the future of our province.

The Speaker:—Order for a minute. Why is the member for

Saskatchewan Rivers on his feet?

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatchewan Rivers wishes to make an introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to introduce to you in the west gallery, one of my constituents and a former Member of Parliament, Ray Funk. I would ask all of the members present to welcome here to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION OF APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Krawetz.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look for the people in this budget, and all I've seen is an out-of-touch government, playing games with the future of our province. A government that doesn't see the impact on people of their ruinous ways. A government so drunk with power that it would do anything, say anything, to remain in power. A government with no plan. A government with no control. A government that when it awakens from its binge will see a province devastated.

And as they try to come up with something else to blame for their inadequacy, what will they hear the people say? The people will say it's time to tell the truth to them, the truth so they can assess who it is now that really got them into this mess — a mess that now . . . (inaudible) . . . no need to raise taxes and cut programs.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Rosemont said that the c.v.'s (curriculum vitae) of the new people on the other side would lead you to believe that they should understand economics. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you my economic assessment of a company that I have just reviewed.

Some years ago the people brought a new CEO (chief executive officer) into the company. The new CEO had \$500 million in his bank account, but the new CEO immediately hired some 550 new employees, took the company in a totally new direction, in a few short years took the company into \$1.5 billion debt. Then he called a board meeting, and he told the

board some stories that they wanted to hear. Well right after the board meeting, the CEO changed his story, and he raised taxes, and he showed a \$312 million loss. And he fired 500 of his new employees.

Mr. Speaker, there will be another board meeting soon, and we will tell the board members the true story, and I'm positive, Mr. Speaker, we will have a new CEO in this company very shortly.

On behalf of the people of Saskatoon Northwest, I will not be supporting the budget but will be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very pleased to be able to rise in this House and participate in the speech in support of the budget. Before I begin, I'd like to congratulate the Premier on another successful election campaign that his steady leadership has obviously provided. And I'm proud to serve under a capable and committed and visionary leader such as the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

(14:45)

My congratulations are also extended to the new Leader of the Opposition as he takes on his new role, the member for Swift Current, and on his re-election to the Assembly, and also my best wishes to the former leader of the opposition, the member of Rosetown-Elrose, as he pursues his new role in the Assembly.

I'd also like to join with other members as we wish our esteemed colleague from Yorkton best wishes on a speedy recovery with the challenge that he's facing as well.

Before I begin, I'd also like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to your role, your re-election to your role as the Speaker. You have served this Assembly well over the years as a private member, both in opposition and in this government and also for the last number of years as Speaker. And obviously to be re-elected in that role is a great honour to you.

I'd also like to extend to the member for Regina Wascana Plains . . . to commend her for taking part in that competition. She ran a very good campaign and deserves a lot of kudos. The democratic process was served very well by having a contested nomination. I'd also like to thank the members for the honour of re-electing me as their Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've heard the speeches of the new members, and I was a little intimidated and very impressed. So my congratulations go out to all 10 members, both on the opposition and on the government. As was said earlier, while I was impressed with the speeches, I generally didn't agree with the content of the speeches for the opposition. Now I want to assure the new members that while the debate in this House may get spirited — I'm sure they haven't noticed that in the last couple weeks — it is generally conducted with the utmost respect and dignity for the proceedings.

I would also like to thank — I was not able to participate in the Speech from the Throne debate — but I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the members of Saskatoon Sutherland and the constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland for their support in placing their trust in me to represent them and their concerns in this Assembly. It's a trust that I take seriously, and I welcome the opportunity to serve the many fine people of Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Speaker, this constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland is populated by people from many backgrounds, many socio-economic groups, and it is truly a diverse and vibrant community. The volunteer spirit is strong in the community through Sutherland as evidenced by many cultural activities that are hosted throughout the year, as well as Harvestfest that is a growing festival that happens every fall.

Also I am very honoured to be able to represent the University of Saskatchewan which is within the constituency of Sutherland and has a long and proud tradition of providing education to young people within Saskatchewan, and it is respected throughout the nation. The reputation of the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) extends past our borders, with U of S research resulting in more than 100 new crop varieties and the development of many firsts for Canada. U of S research produced the first genetically engineered vaccine for animals, the first Canadian experiment undertaken aboard a space shuttle, and the first comprehensive history of Native residential schooling in Canada which set the stage for understanding the regressive assimilation policies of the past in order to move towards a shared future.

We can all be proud of the contribution of the U of S in graduates like Dr. Lee Wilson who is the first Métis student to earn a Ph.D (Doctor of Philosophy) from the U of S. Plus Dr. Wilson is the 2004 National Aboriginal Achievement Award winner in the science and technology award category. Congratulations to Dr. Wilson, who is in good company at the U of S which has produced two Nobel laureates, Gerhard Herzberg and Henry Taube, both in chemistry. I congratulate this winning spirit in my constituents.

It's this spirit which is prominent at Innovation Place on the University of Saskatchewan campus in Saskatoon which is also in my constituency; that's a busy place as you know, Mr. Speaker. Innovation Place is one of the most successful university-related research parks in North America and contributes \$250 million to the Saskatchewan economy.

This partnership consists of 120 companies employing more than 2,000 individuals that is responsible for much of the innovation-based development in Saskatoon. This success can be attributed in part to the partnerships which developed the clusters of knowledge in agriculture, information technology, resources, and life sciences. Our government recognizes values and encourages public and private partnerships which engage expertise under the foundation of this great province.

It is also my great fortune again, Mr. Speaker, to have the synchrotron project within my constituency. And yes, Mr. Speaker, I know my good fortune. The synchrotron is the innovation at the speed of light. It's the largest Canadian research project in over 30 years. And the synchrotron

establishes Saskatchewan as the leader in scientific research and will attract industrial and academic researchers from the entire country, indeed from around the world, Mr. Speaker. This project would not have been possible, once again, without partnerships. I congratulate all the partners of the synchrotron which is the result of unprecedented federal, provincial, civic, and academic partnerships that will benefit all Canadians.

We will use this resource to help design new drugs, build more powerful computer chips, develop new materials for safer medical implants, create more effective motor oils, and help with the cleanup of mining waste to name but a few of the applications of the synchrotron. And I know some members hope that it might find a cure for baldness.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to thank the members of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation . . . Cree Nation for developing the first urban reserve in Canada, designed specifically for Aboriginal economic development. This urban reserve is a true success story and a model of entrepreneurial spirit, which will provide an economic base for future generations.

The Muskeg Lake urban reserve companies include: Aspen Development, to develop and sublease businesses on the reserve; TopRank, a plumbing and heating company servicing First Nations construction in the area; Cattail Holdings Ltd., which allows First Nations businesses to be established in an urban setting; Cree-Way Gas — which I was fortunate to be at the opening — to provide a gas bar and convenience store to spur economic development; Creek Investments Ltd., which is a leasing arms of Veterans Plaza, and Muskeg Lake land limited, to hold lands in the process of treaty land entitlement settlement.

These businesses, along with the Muskeg Lake institutions, provide over 300 jobs and contribute to the overall economy of Saskatoon and its surrounding businesses. My congratulations to Muskeg Lake Cree Nation who are Canadian leaders in Aboriginal economic development and self-government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, and probably most importantly, I'd like to thank my family — Karen, my wife, and my three sons — for the continuing support and encouragement they shower upon me each and every day. However, it's the children and the . . . my children and the children of Saskatchewan that I'll be thinking of as I debate this budget.

This is a responsible budget, Mr. Speaker, a budget that will not mortgage our children's future to pay for the spending of today. This is a budget that is concerned with being responsible; responsible to our residents who depend on the province's quality health care, responsible to our children's future through quality education, and responsible to sustainable environmental stewardship of our province.

Mr. Speaker, as this Assembly is aware, the residents of Saskatchewan are fiercely protective of health care. In fact while I was reading the *Los Angeles Times* recently, I came across an article that had the headline that said, "In Canada . . ." Pardon me. "In health, Canada tops U.S." It says:

Our neighbours to the north live longer and pay less for care. The reasons why are being debated, but some cite the

gap between rich and poor in the U.S.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote a couple paragraphs from this article into the record. It goes, quote:

Want a health tip? Move to Canada.

An impressive array of data shows that Canadians live longer, healthier lives than we do. What's more, they pay roughly half as much per capita as we do (\$2,163 versus \$4,887 in 2001) for the privilege.

Exactly why Canadians fare better is the subject of considerable academic debate. Some policy experts say it's Canada's single-payer, universal health (care) coverage . . .

. . . some believe it's something more fundamental: a smaller gap between rich and poor.

. . . "By all measures, Canadians' health is better", says Dr. Barbara Starfield, a university distinguished professor at Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions. Canadians "do better on a whole variety of health outcomes," she says, including life expectancy at various . . . (stages).

. . . "There isn't a single measure in which the U.S. excels in the health arena," says Dr. Steven Bezruchka, a senior lecturer in the School of Public Health at the University of Washington in Seattle. "We spend half of the world's healthcare bill, and we are less healthy than all the other rich countries."

. . . "The summary of the evidence has to be that national health insurance has improved the health of Canadians and is responsible for some of the longer life expectancy" . . .

. . . The bottom line is that Canada is doing something right . . .

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes . . . This budget is about health care. It includes the largest increase in reinvestment in health care in a number of years, over 6 per cent. There were some challenges that had to be faced. We had to reduce funding to several of the departments but it was . . . all the money went to health care, education, and agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my time is growing short so I will not going to be able to get into all of the good news stories that we have talked about, the issues with regards to smoking. But I just wanted to issue some of . . . refer to some of the comments that the members have talked about, about how this budget is not about the future.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a passion for the future. We are making these decisions so that we're ready to go in the next term.

Now I would ask the members opposite. Manitoba received from Ottawa on average about \$1 billion a year. Those are rough figures. Saskatchewan receives about \$100 million a year from Ottawa. Now either the members can say that Saskatchewan is doing very well or it's doing very poorly. But

according to this we're either doing well . . . But I don't think we're doing 10 times better than Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, health care funding from Ottawa has decreased to 16 per cent of health care budgets over the last 10 years. The premiers have gotten together and have asked the federal government to start to increase that to 25 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party feels betrayed. We've heard over the last two weeks the word betrayed many, many times. They say the Sask Party has been betrayed. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what they feel is they feel that they've been betrayed by the electorate. They feel that they've been robbed during the election, that somehow the voters just got it wrong.

An Hon. Member: — They're misunderstood.

Mr. Addley: — That they're misunderstood, as some members are saying. Now, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP is the problem, why did the Sask Party decide to change the leader? If it's all the fault of the people on this side somehow hoodwinking the public and everything is so rosy there, why would they feel the need shortly after the election to change the leader?

Now I do find it ironic that the member for Swift Current has become their new leader. Because I've sat with the Sask Party for the last four years and the Saskatchewan Party is neither swift, nor current.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party leader, Stephen Harper has been eviscerated recently — well actually over the last year or so — for referring to the culture of despair in Atlantic Canada. Well the last two weeks I think he got it wrong. I think the culture of despair is on the opposition side, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has referred to some surveys concerning health care. Now what you hear . . . when you hear the members opposite talk about health care, they are saying that it is a horrendous system; it is not working for people. Well I've referred to an article in the *Los Angeles Times*. The Minister of Health has referred to the surveys that are conducted and this goes right to the heart of what the Sask Party is saying. They're saying health care is terrible.

Now if you survey the public, their opinion of health care is generally fairly positive. But if you actually asked them, have you had a contact with the health care system, their satisfaction goes through the roof. It's in the 90 per cent range. So what that . . . The conclusion is most people think the health care is pretty good, but they think that they just were the lucky ones to get through with the good service. And that goes to what the Sask Party's been trying to do is undercut the health care system, which is unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud that this government will be providing strong tobacco control measures, as was referenced in the Throne Speech. There's an article recently from the New York *Daily News* from March 29 and they're referring to the total ban that was implemented in New York a year ago. And it indicates that it is good for the lungs. It's also good for business. And I quote:

A year after the controversial law went into effect,

business in restaurants and bars went up 8.7 per cent.

According to the report. This is compared by comparing tax receipts, employment, and business openings and closing from 2002 to 2003. The bottom line is that New York City a year later is a healthier place to work, eat, and drink. And 150,000 people don't have to go into work every day and be smoked on by other people.

(15:00)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I listened quite carefully from the member of Silver Spring. He was quite complimentary to me and I appreciate the compliment and I think he's participated fully in his role as the MLA for Silver Spring.

But he seemed to take a lot of credit for a lot of the good things that are happening in his constituency; that one, it's the fastest growing constituency. Well for the last four years I've been able to say that. And when I knock on doors and people said, you know, what is the NDP doing, I say, well look around; this is the NDP plan of prosperity working for you. And all I can say to the member for Silver Spring is, when I turned it over to him it was in good shape.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — And I'm going to keep an eye on him that he keeps representing the public there.

Now the second thing I would suggest to him is that he was part of a parent group that was lobbying me as their member for a northeast collegiate in Silver Spring. And I attended quite a few meetings, answered a lot of e-mails, a lot of letters, a lot of phone calls. And I was a bit of a pain to the minister of Education and then the Minister of Learning in lobbying for a northeast collegiate.

Now what the member needs to point out . . . And the Minister of Finance as he reminded me, yes I was a bit of a pain. But fortunately that's over with because in this budget there's money for building a northeast collegiate.

Now the member for Silver Spring was a member of that parent group lobbying for a school. He became the MLA for Silver Spring. This budget contains the money, the action required to build the school for his constituents.

I challenge the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs. Will he vote for this budget? Will he vote for his school being built in his community, or will he vote against the school in his community? That is a very important question that needs to be answered by the member for Saskatoon Silver Spring.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a bit of a slogan that I refer to this place because the way the opposition tells it is somehow we stole the election with 45 per cent of the vote, with 30 seats. I refer to this as . . . (inaudible) . . . majority. This is a majority government. Our popular vote increased quite a bit. The popular vote of the opposition decreased by quite a bit.

When you look at the pluralities that the members on this side of the House won by, they were quite large and quite

comfortable. Now the members on the opposite side — you can start looking around — there's probably about a half a dozen, that 1,000 votes strategically distributed would win six more seats for the government.

So my suggestion would be that the results flatter the opposition. Twenty-eight seats with the low popular vote that they received flatters them. And I think most of them know that. You know, I've referred to one member as landslide . . . I shouldn't say that, but I won't refer to the person's name. But I think that they're quite fortunate with the number of seats that they did receive.

I suspect that they, on Thursday next week, some of them may be voting for the budget because they want to build a school in their community, or they'll be strategically away because they don't want to have another election. Because if we have another election, there could be another four or five or six seats over here.

Now it is interesting that on Tartan Day, myself as a Scot is speaking in support of a very frugal and forward-looking budget. And I am quite confident that over the next three years, four years of our mandate, that you'll see these investments paying off in health care, education, and agriculture.

Now just in reference to the election, it is interesting that we have had . . . You know there were three leaders in the election, one of which was referring to our Premier as a liar and a hypocrite. Now our leader did not.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd ask the member to be more judicious in his use of language in this Assembly and be respectful to all members.

Mr. Addley: — Well I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I know you did not direct me to that. There were certain comments that were made in the election that, if they were made in this Assembly, would not be parliamentary, which I will not repeat, I might add.

The Speaker: — Order, please. I just made a statement with respect to use of language in the House and that applies not only to members who are speaking but to the members who also may be hollering across the street. And I respectfully request the member not to make statements of that type.

Member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And perhaps I'll move off of that point because it seems to be a very sore point for the opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear of all the good things that are going on in this budget. As I said, health care spending has increased by 6.3 per cent, by \$160 million; education has increased by 3.8 per cent or \$45 million; the municipal revenue-sharing grant is increased by \$10 million, a third consecutive year. We are focusing on children, youth, and opportunity. We do have sound fiscal management and accountability. And we are supporting our communities through highways and we are fixing the roads.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this budget does recognize education as I indicated, and it is the greatest investment in our province's future.

Okay, there I found it. Anyway I think I've come up with a theme song for the opposition's policy review after hearing the last two weeks . . . I don't know, and I know the member, the member for Swift Current who's had the, I think it was a guitar museum wasn't it, or the country museum . . . and that's The Eagles' "Get Over It". And I'd just like to read into the record, and I won't sing in Cree, and I won't sing any songs but I will quote from their theme song:

They point their crooked little fingers at . . . (everyone)
else
spend all their time feelin' sorry for themselves
Victim of this, victim of that . . .

Get over it
Get over it
All this whinin' and cryin' and pitchin' a fit
Get over it, get over it

You say you haven't been the same since you had your
little crash
But you might feel better if . . . (I) gave you some cash
The more I think about it, Old Billy was right . . .

You're making the most of your losing' streak
Some call it sick, but I call it weak . . .

Get over it
Get over it
It's got to stop sometime, so why don't you quit
Get over it, get over it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was a little bit tongue-in-cheek. But it does seem that the opposition has just not gotten over the fact that they lost in the election. And I do want to say that I am proud to serve with the Premier in a caucus that consistently confronts the challenges of our province and never shirks from the responsibility entrusted in us by the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon, we're quite fortunate to have Yann Martel, the author of *Life of Pi*, being the writer in residence at the Saskatoon library. Basically, in a nutshell, what *Life of Pi* is about is a young boy that moves from India to Canada and en route the boat sinks and he's left in a lifeboat with a very large tiger. In fact it's very similar to the Assembly here; we're sort of trapped here while the House is sitting and there's a tiger and we're basically trying to survive. Maybe I'll write a story about that some day.

But the conclusion is that there's two stories in *Life of Pi*. There's the several hundred stories . . . several hundred pages within the story and then there's a two-page report at the end.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's two stories in this Assembly. There's the negative doom and gloom story that is put forward by the opposition that asks for more money to be spent on this, more tax cuts here, not balancing the books, no consequences for their actions, and then there's the very rigorous, confident,

optimistic, positive story on the government side.

Mr. Speaker, my time is coming to a close. I'm very proud to support the 2004-2005 provincial budget. As I've outlined, I believe this budget is a thoughtful work that carefully balances the desire of our government to be socially responsible with the realities of being fiscally responsible. I will be voting in favour of the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I notice in the last few days the difficulty that you've had in controlling certain members with their lack of parliamentary language. And I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that as difficult as it may be for the Speaker, it is equally as difficult for members of the opposition to try and control their language when they're trying to properly develop terminology in describing certain comments that are made by members of the government.

And I follow this budget speech, and I follow the statements that were made during the election by the Premier, with some considerable interest and had some difficulty in trying to reconcile the various statements that were made, Mr. Speaker. And I notice, Mr. Speaker, that in the American government there is similar problems with politicians and their use of language. And I was wondering perhaps, Mr. Speaker, if some of the members opposite had been looking at various US (United States) presidents to develop their speaking style and how they handle statements that they were going on to have difficulty with.

I noted that President Nixon, when he was dealing with the Watergate Crisis, made a number of statements that he later on had considerable problems with. And that president handled those statements by having his press secretary make announcements that those particular statements were no longer operative. And I thought, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps the Premier would simply state that the promises that he made during the election were no longer operative. But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that our Premier is somewhat more creative and I think he went on and he looked at the methodology used by Bill Clinton.

Bill Clinton was a very creative president and he made a statement that caused him a lot of problems. He stated that he did not have sexual relations with that girl, with Monica Lewinski. And what he did to try to avoid that problem later on, Mr. Speaker, was he used a different definition of sexual relations. And I thought that was very creative on his part and I think that our Premier has learned from that methodology.

What he's done is simply restates his election promises and then states we are doing them in a reasonable manner, which is sort of his simple way of restating the same things and saying that he can do something different on it now.

What he's doing is saying things like we will lower taxes in a responsible manner, which really means, I'm going to raise the

taxes. We are going to maintain the PST in a responsible manner, which means, we are going to raise the taxes. We will protect and maintain the civil service, which really means, we are going to lay off or terminate some 500 employees.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier has done a very good job of using the Clintonesque method of dealing with the truth and dealing with electoral statements made during the election, and this method of saying, I'm going to do this in a realistic way or I want to do this in a responsible manner.

And I'm wondering today, Mr. Speaker, if the people and the good citizens of Saskatoon Riversdale were allowed to vote again today, would they like to have the opportunity of voting for the Premier in the same responsible way that he's treating them? And perhaps that responsible method of treating the voters might be by voting for the Saskatchewan Party and maybe those people would like to be given that opportunity again.

Mr. Speaker, it defies logic and is an insult to the intelligence of the voters of this province to talk about a Fiscal Stabilization Fund in any kind of positive sense. The Provincial Auditor, the media, the public know far better than to try and believe that kind of a ruse and it's not an acceptable way of presenting anything to the public any more.

I was surprised to see the member from Moose Jaw North stand up and say, the fiscal stabilization's account we're transferring from this to that account while the reality, Mr. Speaker, is they're not transferring from one account to the other. They're taking from one overdrawn credit card to another overdrawn credit card, and the debt that we are leaving the grandchildren that we will have will be somewhat in excess of \$12,000 per person based on the population of about a million people. So it doesn't matter whether you're getting a cash advance from this credit card or a cash advance from that credit card, Mr. Speaker, the fiscal stabilization is not there.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that I find incredibly offensive about this budget speech is the method of saying, we're only going to read partway down the financial statement and then we're going to talk about it being balanced before we bring in all of the expenses and all of the interest charges and everything else . . . (inaudible) . . . It's just like going to your bank for a loan as a business person and saying, this is my gross income, and not including any of your expenses.

That type of businessman would be thrown out by the bank manager and would not be allowed to set foot in the bank. This type of policy is what this government is trying to perpetrate on the members of the public. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not an acceptable thing to do.

(15:15)

The financial statement of this province, page 12 of it, shows the increase in net debt between one year and the next year and it's increasing by hundreds of millions of dollars over the period of time. And all you need to do is look at where you are at the beginning of the year, the end of the year, and that's a very simple way to look at it, Mr. Speaker. You don't need to talk about fiscal stabilization funds, but the idea of moving

partway down a financial statement to try and use that as a ruse that you are somehow balancing the budget, is not an acceptable way of presenting financial information to this province.

The Premier talks about developing a green economy. There is nothing, Mr. Speaker, in this budget that talks anywhere about what they're going to do to develop a green economy, and I suspect that the mentality that's used is probably meaning the purchase of a used, green Volvo. But there is nothing in here that talks anywhere about how they're going to promote or develop the economy.

In fact, the only reference to a green economy is the firing of some 200 civil servants out of the Environment department. How are they going to develop anything green or responsible out of that?

Mr. Speaker, we have a wonderful province. We have enormous potential in this province. The tragedy of this budget is that it has done nothing to promote and develop this province. People continue to leave the province in droves.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you a little bit about what happened at a recent realtor's conference in Calgary. The realtors were trying to develop a new marketing strategy to bring people into the city. And what they were encouraged to do was go after the parents of people that they had sold houses to in the last two or three years so that those people would be . . . the next market would be the parents and the grandparents of the baby boomers that are already there. People that would be willing to move out of this province, taxpaying people that would move to Calgary so that they can be closer to their children and their grandchildren.

The effect of that, Mr. Speaker, is that the province of Alberta has not just plucked our fruit, they've now come back and they're taking the roots out of our ground. The NDP government should be ashamed that that is the legacy that they are leaving the next generation for this province.

Mr. Speaker, during the run-up to this budget speech and during this budget speech we heard a number of excuses why there was financial difficulty and how they were wrestling with this, with this economy. We heard about drought, we heard about forest fires, and we heard about BSE.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've lived in this province all my life and we've had drought in this province and it's been a problem, and it's been a factor since the 1930s. Let's develop a strategy for it. Let's develop a safety net. Let's develop an income averaging method so we can do it. Let's just get on with it and develop a long-term strategy.

Let's develop an income averaging method so we can do it. Let's just get on with it and develop a long-term strategy. Let's stop whining about it, let's stop complaining about it, let's get over it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also had forest fires in this province. We've had forest fires in this province since long before people were in this province. Budget for it, plan for it, get over it. Mr. Speaker, that is the government, they have an obligation to it. There is nothing new, nothing unusual for it,

and now the best strategy they have come forward is we're going to let them burn. Well if you think it's the best thing to do to let them burn, let them burn; but develop the strategy, get on with it, and stop coming back into this House and using it as an excuse because they can't budget properly.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that they had that was any kind of a reasonable excuse or a reasonable problem that was unforeseeable was the BSE crisis. If they had come forward and said we spent \$50 million or \$80 million on BSE, and that was the amount of the real deficit, I suspect the people of this province would say yes, fair enough, we'll live with that, it's understandable, we can work around that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not what they've done. They've come and used every other reason under the sun to try and work around what their responsibilities are.

Mr. Speaker, we need a plan and a commitment to develop this province, and that was the one thing that was sorely lacking in this budget. This budget was a series of Band-Aids and a series of mop ups to try and deal with other problems that were in this budget. In this province we've got some magnificent resources that we haven't used. We have forestry. We need to encourage, foster, and develop forestry in this province. It's great opportunities for our northern citizens and our First Nations people. We need to work to develop roadways, licensing, Crown grants. There is enormous potential that has to be harnessed and developed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have significant pulse and cereal crops in our agricultural sector. What are we doing to promote processing? Is there anything in this budget that develops secondary and anything else . . . is there anything there that deals with marketing? Is there anywhere that deals with a global strategy? There is nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this province also has enormous potential for irrigation. What has this government done and what have they done to build or develop that infrastructure? What they've done in fact is they've gone out and developed a potato industry that's bankrupt, and they've also gone back now to the people of this province saying one of the reasons we can't open your parks is because we spent the money on SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) — a failed venture.

Why don't they stay out of those things? Let the private sector do those things, develop the infrastructure, develop the tax regime, develop the regulatory system, and let private sector deal with those things. And that's not what they're doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this province has substantial oil reserves that have not yet been developed because of the hostile attitude of the NDP towards business. I heard the Finance minister say earlier this week, and I heard him say in his budget speech, that this government did not wish to be an impediment to business. What a negative thing: we do not wish to be an impediment to business. What's wrong with being a coach? What's wrong with being a cheerleader? Why do they have to say, well we don't think we'll be a goalie this year? Get off of it. Let's have them, let's have them promote. Let's have them try and thank the business for coming in here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan is one of the largest suppliers in the world of uranium. What has happened under this government? We put it on rail cars. We ship it to Ontario for processing and marketing. Where are the jobs in that sector? They are all in Chalk River. They are all out of this province. None of those jobs are here. We're drawing it from the ground, loading it in a rail car, and shipping the jobs out of here with . . .

Mr. Speaker, we also have a newly developing diamond industry in this province. It is doing well in spite of the NDP. It is my hope that they don't choose to start NDP diamondco or any other involvement in the diamond industry because that industry will do quite well on its own if they just stay out of it. If they want to say thank you, that would be a nice thing to do. But otherwise leave it alone. It'll work by itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we also have significant potash facilities. In spite of the fact that the NDP government bought all the potash mines and then sold them back and played games with it, that is an industry that has recovered and because it's now in the private sector is one of the most successful, profitable businesses in North America. And that's done so now that the NDP are leaving that business alone.

And I think they should leave more businesses alone. Develop the regulatory scheme. Develop the infrastructure. Let the business go on by itself, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP say to the Saskatchewan Party: what would you do? Well, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party would take steps to try and grow the province. We would take steps to try and ensure that the proper initiatives are there, the right education is there for our young people, that we would do things so that we don't see our children leaving. We would develop a plan that would keep students here, that would give them a positive, cash incentive to stay here.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we hear from the Minister of Learning is — and he stands up and he regularly talks about — well spend more, tax less. That's the only two things that that side of the House understands . . . is taxation and expenditure and the trade-off between them.

What they miss out completely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the most important part of the puzzle, and that is growing the economy of this province. There is no excuse why a resource-rich province like this should have to have Alberta envy. We should all be able to collectively get over it, grow this province, develop this province, and let it take its rightful place in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Morgan: — The final thing that this government should do and should get over is the incredible waste and mismanagement and the lost and failed business ventures: the Broes, the SPUDCOs, the vast host of things like the infrastructure.

The ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan), a land titles system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has cost now over \$100 million — on par with the federal government gun

registry on a per capita expenditure — for a system that need not have cost us more than a few million dollars because other provinces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were willing to give us their system, no charge, just the . . . No, no, we think we can create our own. So we went off, created our own, and still this many months later still not working, raising the fees, running in a deficit. Unfortunately it is too typical of what the NDP government has done.

Mr. Speaker, if the government on the other side, if the members opposite want to do something productive, want to look to us to do something productive and creative, I invite them to look at the Bill that we presented earlier this week on whistle-blower legislation. That Bill goes a long ways to protect civil servants so that we don't have to, as opposition, continue to receive brown envelopes under the door. I would invite them to look carefully at that Bill, make whatever constructive changes they feel are necessary so that they can support that Bill, and let's pass something, and let's do something as a House that we can do together.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this budget. I will, however, be supporting the amendment. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you very much. I'm very pleased to get up to enter into this budget debate, although my time will be limited and unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I won't have time to deal with all of the inaccuracies that were just recited in the other member's speech.

But I do want to relate an incident that occurred, where the hon. member was present, just last Friday in Saskatoon. And this is kind of indicative of the approach that the members opposite take because they pretend that nothing positive could ever happen in Saskatchewan. And you know, the member from Saskatoon Southeast and I were both invited to an event at the College of Commerce in Saskatoon last Friday. And I was asked to get up and say a few words, which I did.

And one of the things I talked about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact — and this is a fact — that Saskatchewan has a program to encourage the development of the mining sector, and it has been working.

And I want to say to that hon. member and his colleagues who get up and say that oh you can't do business in Saskatchewan because the NDP won't let you. Well I want to say to that member and to the House and anybody listening today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are two areas of mining where Canada is the leader in the world — only two. And both of them are headquartered in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And they are the uranium industry where

Saskatchewan has the largest uranium industry in the world, and the potash industry where Saskatchewan has the largest potash industry in the world.

And this member and his colleagues want to say to the people that we don't have industrial development in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well we can always use more.

But I want to recite a little incident that occurred with the hon. member from Southeast and his colleague from Silver Springs and the one from Carrot River, and they were all at the same meeting I was. I got up at the meeting, and I said, I want to ask a question. How many people at this meeting are aware that the province of Saskatchewan has a policy that for any gold or base metal mine, any new mine that comes into production — this policy is about a year and a half old — that there is a 10-year royalty holiday? Talk about incenting development.

And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? None of them put up their hands because they did not know. They did not know what the policies of the province of Saskatchewan in relation to mining even were, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's one example.

So that member gets up, and he suggests that we need incentives for mining, but he doesn't acknowledge the incentives we have. He says that we can't do business in Saskatchewan, but he doesn't acknowledge we have the biggest uranium industry and the biggest potash sector. And then he says in his speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he says well what about the processing of pulse crops. He says we need incentives to encourage the processing of pulse crops. Well we do need processing of pulse crops, and there's more that goes on today than did ever before, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the reason is that Saskatchewan has the lowest tax regime for manufacturing and processing in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker, including the province of Alberta.

(15:30)

So what I want of anybody listening to this to know is that when that member and his colleagues continually get up and say the government should do this, the government should do that, they're not even aware what the policies of the province of Saskatchewan are.

And of course you know the other problem, listening to the members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this: that they come in day after day and they say two things basically. They say the government spends too much, and therefore we have too much debt . . . they say in one breath. Then a few minutes later, they'll get up, and they'll say no, you know the government needs to spend more. The government should spend more on agriculture. The government should spend more on K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) education so that there's lower property taxes. The government should spend more on crop insurance. That's what they say, and of course everybody's taxes according to them should be lower.

And I say to anybody watching this . . . you know I don't think people are that naive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they truly believe that these people, if they ever were in government — God forbid — could actually deliver on what they say because what they say is they're going to spend, spend, spend and cut all

the taxes. And somehow they are going to eliminate the debt at the same time. It's a very interesting formula, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course the problem is it doesn't add up.

But I want to say to the people of the province and anyone watching this that I've never seen a budget debate where the opposition didn't get up and condemn the budget and condemn everything that was going on in the province. And it's the same thing every year. But what I'd like the people to know is . . . when that member who was just up gets up and says that somehow the government is, you know, taking us down the road to a lot of increased debt and fiscal difficulty, I want that member to explain why it is that since 1995 the province of Saskatchewan has had 11 consecutive credit rating upgrades from the credit rating agencies in Toronto and New York. That's the reality.

And if the member wants to read the budget document . . . and I'm not quite sure that he has because if he had I think he would be perhaps more informed than he seems to be. But if he would look at the budget document . . . and I would refer him to page 57 in this regard. And these are the sorts of things that credit rating agencies look at. He would know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in 1994 the debt of the province of Saskatchewan stood at 65 percent of the gross domestic product — the debt to GDP (gross domestic product) ratio — which is what credit rating agencies and financial analysts look at. It was 65 per cent; that's what our debt was.

For 2003, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was 33.7 per cent. In other words, our economy has grown, and our debt has gone down. One of the members says, look at the dollars. I'll tell the member what the dollars are. The dollars are, that at one time in 1993-94 the debt of the province peaked at over \$15 billion, with a B. Today the debt of the province is more in the range of \$12 billion. In case the member doesn't know that, 12 billion is lower than 15 billion.

But I want to say something else to those members opposite. When this government came to power, Mr. Deputy Speaker — after nine years of rule by the Devine Conservatives that were supported by those members — when we came to power, the interest charges paid on the debt at one point amounted to about \$861 million. The interest charges paid on the debt last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were \$605 million. Most reasonable people would say that an approximate \$250 million drop in interest cost was a good thing and that we were headed in the right direction.

Now the opposition of course never will recognize any progress being made in the province of Saskatchewan because that's not their job. Their job is to complain on a full-time basis and get paid for that at the public expense. And they do it very well. They do it very well. They will complain that the debt is too high. They will complain that the spending is too high. And then they'll complain that the spending is too low, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I've been around this House long enough to hear the members opposite complain three years ago, because why? The number of public servants had gone up by 500 people — 85 more to fix roads, so many more to work in the area of child welfare. And members who will hear and people who pay attention to what

goes on in the legislature will remember that day after day — I was the Finance minister, so I remember — they were up saying the worst thing in the world that could happen was 500 more public servants.

Now you listen to them and the worst thing that can happen is 500 fewer public servants, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And my point is, it doesn't really matter what is in the budget, it doesn't really matter what is in the budget, this opposition is going to complain about it because they never have anything positive to say about anything. And I think that's unfortunate because . . . Turning away from the opposition towards something more positive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say there are some positive things in the budget. And what are they?

They are these, Mr. Speaker — there are four main priorities in the budget. The first is health care, which is very important to the people of the province and it receives a 6.6 per cent increase which is significant; education, which is very important to the people of the province and receives a 3.8 per cent increase; highways, where the government has embarked on another four-year plan to fix the roads.

And I want to say that three years ago we embarked upon a plan to fix the roads, which all of us would acknowledge was long overdue, and we have seen much progress in highways. There's still highways that need to be fixed, but we've seen progress, we've seen a lot of work done because we've been spending record amounts on highway construction, about \$300 million per year. And that continues with this budget which commits \$295 million this year for highway spending. And over the course of a four-year term it is about \$1.2 billion that will be spent on highways infrastructure, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think that's very significant.

And we also see in this budget, in addition to increases to health care, education, highways — which is very relevant by the way to rural Saskatchewan where most of those members represent. It's important to rural Saskatchewan, and they should support the highways budget instead of just being critical of it because we need infrastructure work.

And also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again this year we see a significant increase to funding for municipalities, and that helps the municipal sector in terms of their roads and their sewer and water which are very basic services for people.

And one of the things I'd like to say is that what we have seen over the last few years has not only been significant progress in the area of highways infrastructure, where we're fixing the roads, but also sewer and water because anyone who's been in this House for a while — and some of the members here have been, most of them — will remember that a few years ago we were really having trouble on the water front. We were having trouble with aging sewer and water systems, a lot of boil-water advisories. There still are some.

But the point is this: the government, through the Department of the Environment in co-operation with municipalities and the federal government — because they put money into infrastructure, along with the province and the municipalities — have been fixing dozens of water systems in Saskatchewan

every year. And, you know, we're tackling this problem fairly effectively, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And those are the things that people really care about. They care about water and sewer services. They care about their roads. They care about their highways. And we're making positive progress on those fronts, and that progress is going to continue.

And I want to say also, in a positive way, that we have a plan. Whether or not the opposition wants to admit it, we have a plan to grow this economy. And that plan has been making progress. And I'm going to, I'm going to talk about it because, to listen to these people over there, you get this kind of negative doom and gloom image that nothing is happening in Saskatchewan.

And what I'm here to say is that — notwithstanding the total lack of co-operation by the federal government, which fines and penalizes the province every time we try to develop the oil and gas sector — last year there was record drilling in the oil and gas sector. And last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was something like \$1.8 billion private sector investment in the oil patch. Over the last five years, there has been \$1 billion private sector investment in forestry projects.

And while I'm on my feet, now that I think of it, when I was at the College of Commerce I asked another question of the audience, which included three members of the opposition. I said, how many people here are aware that in the last two years, two of the world's largest oriented strand board plants have opened in Saskatchewan — namely in Meadow Lake and Hudson Bay? And a few of the people in the audience, several actually, put up their hands.

But you know what? I don't believe that all of the members opposite put up their hands. I don't believe they were aware of some of the progress that is being made in oil and gas — which employs about 23,000 people directly and indirectly in this province — in forestry, and in mining.

And I want to say to those members who say that we do not develop mining, I already mentioned that we have two of the largest industries in the world located in Saskatchewan, the only areas where Canada is a leader in the world. But I want to say also . . . The member talked about diamond development. I want that member to know — when he says that, you know, we should stay out of the way — that one of the things we're asked to do by the diamond industry is to meet with them and work with them to develop policies that will grow the diamond industry. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been doing that. We've been meeting the diamond industry. I've been to the Shore Gold property, looking at the diamond mine and mill that they're trying to establish there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've been to the Fort A La Corne property of Shore Gold and I've looked at their operation. And I've met with them on numerous occasions because what we're going to do, which we're committed to do, is to develop a very, very competitive royalty structure for the mining of diamonds in Saskatchewan.

And if the member who just spoke thinks that we shouldn't be meeting and developing policies to assist that industry, I'm afraid I have to beg to differ with the member. What any government must do is meet with all the sectors of the economy in an effort to grow them and that is what we have been doing. And I want those members to know, and anybody listening as well, that even though they like to get up and say that nothing can happen in the economy in Saskatchewan, I want to tell them what the private sector says about economic development in Saskatchewan.

According to the Conference Board of Canada for the year 2003, the Saskatchewan economy will have grown by 5.4 per cent. That's not my figure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the figure of the Conference Board of Canada. The Bank of Montreal projects the Saskatchewan economy will have grown by 5 per cent. And in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan economy for 2003 will have grown faster than any other economy in Canada.

Now do we want to do better? Yes, we want to do better because all of Canada experienced a slowdown in 2003. That's a fact. Canada was affected by SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome); it was affected by BSE; it was affected by West Nile virus; it was affected somewhat I think by probably the Iraq war; it was affected very significantly by a slow turn down in the U.S. economy. And of course in Saskatchewan, it was affected by two years of severe drought.

I'm always a bit amused when I hear the members opposite get upset when we say that drought is going to have an effect on the economy. Is there anyone in Saskatchewan that doesn't know that drought has a serious effect on our economy? Just them, another member says, and I think that's true.

The fact of the matter is that the Canadian economy took some hits. We took some hits. But you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our economy is more diversified than it has ever been in our history because the oil and gas sector is growing, the mining sector is growing, the forestry sector is growing, manufacturing and processing is growing. And all of us would agree that we have to grow those sectors more. We have to do more and that's what we're going to do.

(15:45)

And I want to say to those members that continually get up and they want to divide rural people from urban people. They want to say that the budget was . . . did nothing for rural Saskatchewan. I want them to know that there was a 5 per cent increase budget over budget to the budget of the Department of Agriculture this year. I want them to know that the municipalities throughout this province in all parts of the province are going to get a substantial increase this year. I want them to know that we're fixing the roads throughout the province.

I also want them to know that we have over the past year put \$55 million, I believe is the figure, extra unbudgeted money into support for cattle producers. And so we should. That's something that we should do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we'll continue to use our resources as carefully as we can

to build the economy of the province, to move the economy forward in a positive way. Not with all the doom and gloom we hear from over there but in a realistic, fair, positive way, recognizing all of the good things that are happening in our province and all of the good people that we have in Saskatchewan that don't have time to sit around and gripe and complain endlessly because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're busy working to build Saskatchewan.

That's what most people are doing and we're going to be supporting them by doing that. And I'm sure that other members of the opposition will get up and they'll say that this budget is the end of Western civilization as we know it and we're all going to Hades in a handbasket. Because that's what they do.

And I could go on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I could talk about the young entrepreneurs program that there is for youth in this budget. I could talk about the post-secondary graduate tax credit that is being implemented to \$500 going up to \$1,000 over the next three years. I could talk about the Green Team jobs for young people. I could talk at great length about all of the positive things that are being done in this budget. And I've only had time to touch on some of them.

But I do want to say, just remind people to keep it in perspective, that we will always hear and always have heard very negative things about everything contained in the budget from a government from that opposition party. I'm sure that won't change.

But I want to assure people that on any factual basis, when you look at the level of debt and when you look at the level of taxation which has been going down in Saskatchewan, we have been making considerable progress in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have every confidence that over the course of this term of government we will continue to do so. And this budget will contribute positively to that.

So I'm going to rise in my place quite proudly and vote against the amendment of the opposition and I'll be voting in favour of this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a . . . Humbly, I stand here and say thank you to the members or the constituents of mine from the new constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook and become their voice again in this legislature for the problems that this government, this NDP government has put upon us in the last four years.

Before I go into the budget speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to first of all thank the Speaker, the member from P.A. (Prince Albert) Carlton, on his reappointment as the Speaker. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the member from Wascana Plains for putting her name forward in this democratic race that we have in this province and country.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the five members from the NDP side, the new members to this Legislative Assembly. I hope that your dreams and aspirations as politicians will be fulfilled in some form or another . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And as the member said — shortly. We'll see about that.

I also want to turn to the members on this side of the House, the five new members, and say congratulations to them for being our representatives in the province of Saskatchewan for their constituencies. I know joining the Saskatchewan Party is a privilege and a joy. And as time will proceed, we on this side of the House will overcome what happened in 2003 and we will form the next government and we will start to turn this province around so that people in this province have a hope in this province, so that they can see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Before I go into the budget speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to take a few minutes to talk about the new part of my constituency. The new constituency ranges from Medstead to Rosthern, from Canwood down to the edge of North Battleford, and it is a square. It's a large constituency. I know part of that constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, your originally home is from there. So you know that constituency very well.

That part of the constituency, Mr. Speaker, is basically an agricultural constituency. And all the people that live in there — after going through the last few years of drought, of BSE, problems like that — they understand that the only way they're going to do it is by their own experience and by their own toil.

Because when they look for help from this NDP government, they're not going to get it. It's been proven for years and years they won't get help from an NDP government. In fact I would dare to say that I don't think agriculture is even on their radar screen, Mr. Speaker, or Deputy Speaker.

And it's unfortunate because when you look at Saskatchewan years and years ago, how was Saskatchewan built? It was built on the toils of agriculture and then that grew with the small business. And the two driving wheels of our economy in the province of Saskatchewan is, first and foremost, agriculture and small business. And so when you look at both those sectors, they're hurting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're hurting real bad. And this budget that was delivered here a few days ago by the Finance minister does little or gives any help to small business or agriculture in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my old constituency of Shellbrook-Spiritwood, in those areas I had a lot of the northern areas that were in my constituency. And I lost towns and villages like Chitek Lake, Leoville, Debden, Big River, Stump Lake. Those areas there were more diverse in agriculture and they were more towards the forestry area. And I was so glad when my leader then give me the portfolio of critic for forestry because I enjoyed it. It was part of my constituency.

I still retain a lot of business people in those areas that come to me for help. Yes, members from those areas have new leaders right now, new MLAs. One is the new member from Saskatchewan Rivers; the other one is the member from Meadow Lake. But these members still come back to me for

help and I don't know why, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, but they do.

I also have gained towns like Hafford, Blaine Lake, Rosthern, Laird, Speers, and Leask among others. They look to me as their voice to carry on the tradition of an opposition government that will bring to this Legislative Assembly their troubles, their problems, and present them to this Legislative Assembly. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is something that I intend to do.

Further to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about my campaign team. Because in the last election, 2003, my campaign team worked their butts off to see that I got elected.

I would like to thank my campaign Chair, Mr. Frank Zawada for the amount of tireless hours that he put into this campaign to see that I was elected. I also want to thank members like Jack Diesen and David Moe and my president, Les Anderson, for all the tireless hours that they put into my campaign, putting up signs, setting up meetings.

I also want to thank two ladies: my fundraiser person, and my campaign manager, Jody Henderson, for making sure that I was at the right place at the right time; that the funds were coming in and that the success that I experienced now from that campaign as coming out as a victor in that election.

But during that campaign, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to relate to the people here today — I know some of you people have heard it on the radio, some have not — but during that campaign my wife and I were fortunate in one respect and not fortunate in another respect, that we were putting signs up in the Whitkow area. An area where, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you're from so you know exactly where it is, and there was a curve on that highway that has caused many accidents.

And that day my wife, Sheila, and I were putting up signs when we witnessed an accident right on that curve. A little red vehicle rolled in front of us and we were no more than maybe 200 yards from that accident. We heard it, we witnessed it, and we did what we thought we should do and that was jump in our vehicle and run over to that accident. And in there there was two people in the car and one person laying on the ground.

And it's ironic, Mr. Speaker, that we on this side have been putting forth petitions about the coverage of . . . cellphone coverage and then rural Saskatchewan, like the areas like Whitkow, where we couldn't get cellphone coverage.

Just by the stroke of luck my wife decided she would jump on the top of the truck and use my cellphone and, you know something, she got through. And she called 911 and we got rescue people from North Battleford to come out and they saved those people. All three of them today I can report are doing well. One of them is from North Battleford and two of them are from the North, from Cumberland constituency, one from Dillon and one from Patuanak. And I've been in contact with the two from the North and they're doing very well, and I'm so glad and pleased that happened.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there comes a time for politics and there comes a time for common sense. That day my wife and I used common sense and it's a good ending to a story. And

that was a good story for me during that writ period of the election time and that'll resonate with me for years to come — that the 2003 election was something historical for my wife and I, to be part of that rescue process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have often said about the new part of my constituency is an agricultural constituency, and it is. But I find ironic is in this budget is how they've turned on the farmers, how they've turned on rural Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, they've turned on urban Saskatchewan too but the biggest turn is against rural Saskatchewan.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, we talk in this Legislative Assembly day in and day out about that wedge between urban and rural Saskatchewan. Well that wedge is getting deeper and deeper and deeper. That wedge has to disappear but it's not going to disappear if we see the things that come out of the budget like was just presented here in the last week. That wedge is getting deeper and deeper and rural Saskatchewan is getting hurt and it's time the hurt stops.

I just want to reflect on some of the things that was in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I look at the part that says agricultural spending targeted to priority areas. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I look at the difficulty the farmers have gone through for some years regarding the grain, the drought, and on top of that when things are tough this government, all they want to do is raise the crop insurance rates. It isn't bad enough that we had BSE on top of the drought. And now the only insurance program that is there for the farmers, they're paying through the nose for it.

(16:00)

I mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had many phone calls from constituents in my constituency, older farmers that are probably 50, 55, 60 years old. And those people — pardon me, I said older — and those people said, it's ironic that we've worked all our lives, toiled on the farm, and now we're getting close to retirement age and everything is gone.

The banker phones up and says, come renew your loans but remember, Mr. Farmer, you don't have any equity. They've worked all their life and they've got nothing. And that's how many farmers feel.

Something has to change. And the only way it's going to change is for a government to come forth that understands rural life, that understands agriculture. And that party is on this side, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — We're the only ones that's going to change that because if agriculture changes, small business changes. Then centres like P.A., like Saskatoon, like Regina are going to prosper. But it's got to come from the heart of Saskatchewan and the heart of Saskatchewan's agriculture and small business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to talk about what they've

done to rural Saskatchewan when they closed down the rural centres. Where is the people of rural Saskatchewan going to go to?

It's ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Meadow Lake doesn't have a rural centre. There is absolutely nobody, or no centre in the northwest corner. The closest is North Battleford. What are those people going to do? Where are they going to go to? They have no place to go. This is what people in the rural areas are trying to say when they say, we're getting kicked as farmers and rural people — and they are.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk about education because the Minister of Finance said that a lot of the money in this budget is going to go towards health, number one, and education, number two. And most people in the province will understand that.

But in regards to education, I was flabbergasted when today I walked into the Legislative Assembly and on the steps was some SIAST students. And they were hurting just like the farmers were because their schooling has been interrupted because SIAST has gone on strike.

What are these young generation people going to do? They're halfway through the year, some of them just at the end where they're writing exams, and they are forced to put their lives on hold. Why is it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when it comes to children, we use children as a scapegoat to achieve in this province? They don't have a voice but yet we use them as bargaining tools. I feel sorry for those students.

The reason I know that, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, is because two gentlemen from Spiritwood are in SIAST going to plumbing training. They've been there for over a month. They spent their tuition. They're waiting to get the end of the year through so that they can get a wage increase. But you know something? It's not going to happen because they've gone back home. They've got a huge bill. They can't get a wage increase, and they're going to have to wait for another year. Or as my son would say because he's one of them, we'll go to Alberta because there's no job interruption there and we will go to SIAST. The funny thing about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker — they're not coming back.

And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to read for the record a letter from a young girl from Duck Lake. And this lady, this young lady says, "I am from Duck Lake . . ." And pardon me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I quote:

I am from Duck Lake, Saskatchewan but I have spent the last two years in Jasper, Alberta. Though I was away from Saskatchewan, I always referred to it as my home. My time in Jasper was meant as a time for me to figure out what program I wanted to take as post secondary education. Within a few months I decided I would be interested in taking an x-ray technician course. I quickly applied to SIAST in Saskatoon. Much to my dismay I found out that there was a five year waiting list. Five years was too long and unnecessary for me to wait.

Since being disappointed by Saskatoon I turned towards other learning institutions. I am presently enrolled in Grant

MacEwan College in Edmonton which gave me a speedy acceptance as well as the opportunity for a trouble-free transfer to the University of Alberta. My sister is also attending the University of Alberta because of the unproblematic transfer agreement that is common between colleges and universities in Alberta. It is interesting that she was an Alberta/Saskatchewan interprovincial college but no Saskatchewan institute had a transfer agreement. Together with . . . help . . . (from) our parents we . . . (are) in Edmonton. We have no plans to move back to Saskatchewan. (No plans to move back.)

It is disheartening to know that our home province does not offer the academic opportunities that are conducive to our educational needs. I would love to move back to Saskatchewan but that would be a silly decision if I want to get an education I desire. Perhaps it is not a higher drinking age that is losing young people to other provinces but instead it is inadequate post secondary opportunities. Sincerely . . .

Mr. Speaker, that reinforces a fact that we need to keep our young people here. We need to give them jobs. Our young people are the future of this province. And I see very little in this budget speech that will say that we are helping our young people, helping our young people to stay in the province of Saskatchewan.

The second thing I'd like to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this orange book that I received, and it says, "A Blueprint For The North." And in there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is some very value information that I think the province of Saskatchewan, and most importantly our government, the NDP, need to look at. They've been in power for some 10, 12 years, and the frustration in the North is overwhelming and they need a change.

And I just want to read a couple of inserts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I quote:

. . . the pouring of people out of the province also is a large loss to the revenues needed to help keep the economics of the Province in a balanced state. Simply put, the Province cannot continue to go down this road. It needs to not only retain the current population base, but must put forward positive opportunities to attract . . . (young) people who will be part of the future of our provincial economic and social success.

And you know something, Mr. Speaker? If you read back to our platform — the Saskatchewan Party's platform — our proposal was to grow the economy, grow the population, and this is what the northern people are saying. So I say to the northern members on the opposite side, you have to start listening to your own people because they're saying the same thing that all Saskatchewan is.

I also want to bring up shortly, and because my critic area is Northern Affairs, is . . . there are four members here from roughly northern Saskatchewan. There's a member from Cumberland, from Athabasca, from Saskatchewan Rivers, and from Meadow Lake. When this budget was put forth, where were they? I know three out of the four are cabinet ministers.

How can you stand . . . or how can you sit there and let your government destroy the North?

Let's look at the Department of Environment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And in there under budget details it shows that there is going to be a loss of 200 staff. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that in the North it's hard to find jobs, very hard. And now they're going to take away 200 jobs, 200 jobs in the SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) environmental sector. Also that's just to top it all off; the Saskatchewan Environment are going to close offices in northern Saskatchewan. And if I look, most of them are from the North.

I look at closing the fire bases in Saskatchewan. Where are they? They're all from northern Saskatchewan. How are they going to protect the fires up there if they're going to close the fire base centres?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I talked about how the farmers got kicked in this budget. Now I'm talking about how the North is getting kicked. And it's ironic; with the four members we have, and this is the best they can do for northern Saskatchewan? It's no wonder the members from the North . . . or constituents from the North are phoning in and saying, we need to talk to you. We need to talk to the Saskatchewan Party because the route that we are going with the government today is not right.

I also remember in the Throne Speech, there was some opportunity for the North where they said they're going to build the road or finish building the road from La Loche over to the Alberta border which will tie up with the road to Fort McMurray.

You know something? I was glad because — you know something? — to the minister from Northern Affairs, the member from Athabasca, that must come as a relief because finally that road's going to get built. I know members have phoned me from that area and said, hey we're finally getting the road. But you know something? What they're happy about, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . that road's going to be built, and they're finally going to get out of this province and go across the way to Alberta to get a job because there is no jobs in northern . . . or very few in northern Saskatchewan. And what few there was, this government's taken away. I'm sure the members . . . the constituents from northern Saskatchewan are happy with the members opposite.

Another thing I want to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is regarding the campgrounds closure, or not closure . . . not opening until June 20. Well let's take, for instance, Chitek Lake. Chitek Lake is in the constituency of Meadow Lake right now. And right now that's going to be closed until June 20 — June 20.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the May long weekend hits, if you don't come up a couple of days and book a spot or get in there, you're not going to get a spot. And now you know what's going to happen? We're going to have to go up there and just sit there outside the fence because that park is closed down until June 20. Think about all the jobs, the revenue that that town of Chitek Lake is going to lose because they cannot get into the park. And that's just one park, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are

many parks in Saskatchewan doing the same thing.

And the Minister of Environment, the new Minister of Environment stands and said he's not going to change. Well maybe it's about time he and his members from the NDP party start listening to Saskatchewan as a whole.

But remember the difficult financial situation that this province is in now is because of that government. They put us here, and they're going to have to dig us out. God help them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to speak a lot longer on this, but I have to sit down. Other members of my side would like to speak. So therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment, but I will definitely not be supporting this budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

I am pleased to rise in the Assembly again in response to the budget that was delivered last week. This process is certainly different from what I'm used to. I'm used to listening and listening to all sides and . . . but I will continue on.

Our top priorities are providing public-funded health care and education for everyone, not just those who can afford it. This is what I heard during the campaign, and this is what I continue to hear today.

(16:15)

No question, this was a tough but fiscal responsible budget. But by making hard decisions today, we are building a solid future for Saskatchewan's young people. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, young people, particularly the Aboriginal youth, are our future. They are here to stay; their home is here on First Nations and Métis communities and in urban centres — not in Alberta or anywhere else.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — As I mentioned in my response to the Throne Speech, I am proud to represent the Cumberland constituency, one of the largest ridings in Saskatchewan. It has a population of nearly 19,000, mostly Cree and Dene people. Forty-five per cent of them are under the age of 24, and that gives me so much hope and optimism. These are bright young people, succeeding despite the many challenges they have to face.

I see them excelling in university. I see them excelling in sports. The First Nations games are coming up in this coming week, and this is where they'll be profiling some of their talents. They're in jobs. They're in different professions in my own community. I see nurses, community health workers, social workers, and the list goes on. And they are proud of their

culture. And just this past week we saw one of the largest powwows in this province sponsored by the First Nations University in Regina here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government remains committed to creating more opportunities for all young people. And I want to recognize the contribution that our sport, culture, and recreation sectors are making to this vision. And there's a powerful Cree word, in Cree, *mītho pimacīsiwin*, which means a good life. It means so much more than that. It talks about being holistic. And that's what these people who work in these areas have done. They have built Saskatchewan. Sport, culture, and recreation help develop character, self-esteem, discipline, and leadership skills that our young people need for their careers, for their future, and for our future.

And as we move into the province's 100th anniversary, I invite all Saskatchewan people — including our young people, the First Nations, the Métis people, and the North — to help us celebrate our centennial. 2005 is a major milestone in the history of our province. And despite the challenges we face today, we are a privileged people, and we have much to be thankful for. We want 2005 to showcase the same unique spirit of co-operation and innovation that built Saskatchewan and that will lead the next generation to even greater achievements.

We want to recognize the contributions and the generosity of the First Nations people as they welcomed new settlers to their lands. We recognize and honour the treaties we signed together as First Nations and as new immigrants. I belong to Treaty Six. That treaty means we agree to co-exist and to share in all that we have.

And this past . . . two days ago I had a visit from the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and he is doing tremendous work in building bridges to the future by sharing the true meaning of the treaties. These are nation-to-nation agreements, and they are not just temporary agreements. They're here to stay. They're entrenched in the constitution, and the sooner we realize that, the sooner we can move forward.

Saskatchewan's centennial provides us with the opportunity to celebrate past achievements and to look ahead. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, youth must be involved in building a bright future, and we are doing that.

Through the department's centennial student program, more than 600 jobs will be created this year. Through the Provincial Youth Advisory Committee, we are working with youth in government decision making, and we are listening. The new CareerStart program will prepare youth for career opportunities in Saskatchewan and connect youth to jobs. The School^{PLUS} model is being expanded to more schools, and we are enhancing the post-secondary graduate tax credit. The government's new green initiative will help Saskatchewan students get work experience and training in the environment sector.

Our commitment is to make Saskatchewan ready for the next generation. To meet the challenge, we are also working with our partners in developing a new strategic direction for the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. We continue to believe the community development work is best handled outside of government within community organizations and our

third-party agencies that lead the sectors.

But we must put greater emphasis on developing the core leadership skills of the First Nations and Métis youth and those of the North. Sports, culture, and recreation have a major role to play in building leadership and in continuing to provide a quality of life for all people in Saskatchewan. The Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation will focus on providing policy leadership, strategic communications, effective management, stewardship, and accountability of the government's \$60 million annual investment in sports, culture, and recreation so that everyone, including First Nations and Métis youth and those of the North, benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of public priorities in health and education, we had to make reductions to sport, culture, and recreation this year. However we limited the reductions so that it would have the least impact on core operations of our partner organizations.

In 2004 and '05, the cultural industry's development fund will receive \$300,000; SaskFilm, \$900,000; and the film employment tax credit, 4.2 million. The Royal Saskatchewan Museum will receive 1.7 million. And we will move the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation out of government to become a more independent operation.

The Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts will receive 425,000; the Western Development Museum, 2.4 million; Wanuskewin Heritage Park, 500,000; and 100,000 for the Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative. The Saskatchewan Arts Board will receive a \$1 million increase for a total of 4.8 million this year. And funding to the Saskatchewan Archives Board is up 351,000, totalling nearly 3.4 million. We will also continue to support all program funding through the Community Initiatives Fund for a total of 10.3 million in 2004 and '05.

While our budget is responding to the current fiscal reality in Saskatchewan, the Provincial Secretary will continue to promote Saskatchewan's identity, heritage, and the achievements of the people of Saskatchewan. And as we approach the province's centennial, there will be opportunities for Saskatchewan people to express their pride in the province and show their spirit. We will continue working to engage the hearts and minds of people of all ages to celebrate the very best this province has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by thanking some people that helped me a lot the past few weeks and year. I want to thank the department staff and also, I believe, some of the best constituency workers in the province: Susan Folkersen and Anita Jackson in La Ronge.

And I also want to thank the guidance of so many people in my home and in my constituency. I'd particularly like to thank Allan and Roberta Quandt of La Ronge and so many trappers and fishermen and many people, including young people in the North, who have shown their support to me in so many ways. And I also want to honour and thank my parents. They've been great role models throughout my life. My father turned 80 last weekend and he still fishes and traps. And it's such a privilege to be able to listen to him and get advice from him. And I know I'm one of the privileged few that have such a strong family to

back me up in these difficult times. And that's what gives me the greatest hope is having parents like that and the large extended family that I have and the tremendous support that I'm receiving.

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

... constituency office, Anita Jackson and Susan Folkersen.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker ... (Cree) ... Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an honour for me to be back in this Assembly to represent the great people of the Estevan constituency. My constituency is one of oil fields, grain fields, home of Rafferty dam which I challenge the members opposite to try and walk across, Boundary dam, Boundary dam power station, Shand power station, and the Shand Greenhouse just to name a few.

My constituency has expanded to include the very progressive town of Radville and its surrounding area. The Radville area was previously served by the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy and that member, Mr. Deputy Speaker, represented that area very well. And although I know I have very, very tough shoes to fill, I will do my best to serve my area along with the rest of my constituency to my best capacity.

Mr. Speaker, in 1999 I received over 48 per cent of the vote, and last fall I received over 51 per cent of the vote. So to the people of the Estevan constituency, I say thank you for the confidence and trust you have bestowed upon me.

I would at this time like to extend my congratulations to Mr. Speaker on his re-election to that role. And I would also like to congratulate the member from Regina Wascana Plains for letting her name stand for that position. I think she showed a lot of courage and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you I applaud her for entering that race.

I would also like to congratulate all members who were re-elected. And to the new members on both sides of the House, I say congratulations and welcome.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend my best wishes to the member from Yorkton. I and every other member of this Assembly wish him not only a speedy recovery, but a complete recovery.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. I am proud to have the complete support of my family. And we all know — and I am talking about members on both sides of this Assembly — we all know about the pressures that go along with being elected. We have very, very unselfish families and they make huge sacrifices so that we can fulfill our positions.

And I appreciate an understanding family that doesn't put added

pressure on me because every elected person in this Assembly, every MLA's job as that, will come to an end sooner or later. And that is either by our choice or the choice of the electorate. So it's important to do our best to manage our lives to include those important to us, because when this is all said and done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will be there for us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately I lost two of my biggest supporters last summer. My dad passed away in July, just short of his 86th birthday. He was my number one fan and I miss him more than words can ever express.

My mom, bless her heart, lives in Estevan in her own home and watches these proceedings faithfully. And I know she's watching now — so mom, I love you. And I would just like to thank my parents for the upbringing I had and for the values they instilled upon me. And I might add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if I ever act untoward and disrespectful toward my fellow mankind, it is my doing and it is not something my parents should be blamed for.

Mr. Speaker, I also lost Doug Turnbull last June. Doug co-managed my campaign in 1999. He worked loyally and tirelessly for me and the Saskatchewan Party. We all miss Doug's advice and guidance, and I was honoured to give the eulogy at his funeral at the request of his family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to thank Ray Walton, who managed my campaign last fall. Ray and I were on the road for 28 days, and the advice he gave me was immeasurable. Under his guidance, our campaign was positive, honourable, and honest. So I thank Ray and my entire team.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you are aware, my husband and I — my husband Dick and I — own and operate our grain and oilseed farm near Macoun. We know first hand the devastation in the agriculture industry: high input costs, low commodity prices, recent hikes in crop insurance premiums, SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) rate hikes for farm vehicles, high education taxes on farm land. And for those involved in the cattle industry there was and is the BSE issue. And this was all before budget day.

(16:30)

Since budget day we've had more bad news from this NDP government: cancellation of the farm fuel rebate on retail gasoline purchases, a 20 per cent reduction on the rebate on bulk farm fuel purchases, cancellation of the conservation cover program, and farmers were very disappointed to learn that there would be no relief on the education portion of property tax.

This was after reeves and councillors at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention told the Premier, and in fact the entire NDP cabinet, that going with the status quo would lead to tax revolts. There was also closure of 22 rural service centres. The centre in Estevan is one that this government chose to close.

Mr. Speaker, these centres provided a wealth of knowledge. Our agrologist, Colin Beaulieu, was instrumental in providing

information and knowledge to those in the area. He is very involved in the Estevan community and I, like so many others, consider Colin a friend. He's gone, Mr. Speaker. The crop insurance office is gone. In fact, on budget day, March 31, the pink slips were delivered to crop insurance personnel at approximately 2 p.m. and workers told to go home.

March 31, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the final day that farmers could contact the crop insurance office and make changes to what crops they wanted to insure and specify the percentage of coverage. What a slap in the face for rural Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, not only is this a direct assault on rural Saskatchewan, it is an assault on all of Saskatchewan. Because if those in the rural communities have money, do you know what they do, Mr. Speaker? They go to town and they spend that money. I'm reminded of the words of Sir Leonard Tilley. I quote:

Destroy the farmer and grass will grow in the streets of every city in the nation.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, frankly I'm sick and tired of this old NDP government blaming their mismanagement on drought and agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, the announcement on budget day of the closure or conversion of hospitals is not going to shorten waiting lists. In fact, it'll cause more of a backlog in the system. I would like to thank Tracy Grube of Estevan who contacted my office with concerns of her father, Dennis Scott. Tracy and her entire family have been very courageous and I thank them for making the public aware of the severity of these waiting lists.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, since Tracy's family went public, a number of people have contacted the offices of opposition MLAs with the hope that they will be shown the respect they deserve and their needs dealt with in a timely manner. So again I would like to take this time to thank Tracy Grube and her folks and wish them all the best.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a reduction in long-term care beds is nothing short of kicking our senior citizens and others who need this care out of their beds. The government first tried two years ago to increase the costs of long-term care by such enormous amounts that no one could even afford to stay there. This was met with such huge outcry that the NDP government had to backpedal on that. Now they're at it again — preying on the vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, I got out my trusted dictionary and I looked up the word promise, and here's how the dictionary describes promise:

A declaration that something will or will not be done or given, etc.

Also stated was:

An indication of future excellence or achievement.

Maybe the Premier, the Finance minister, and the others on that side have some special NDP dictionary that describes a promise as something different, but I think I have listed the true

meaning. And what the Premier has and is delivering to the people of this province is not the promise he made last fall.

He never promised an increase in the PST. He never promised hospital closures. He never promised the layoffs of 500 people. He never promised a 13 per cent hike in crop insurance premiums. And he never promised closure of 22 rural service centres. He never promised all the other surprises we've been dealt.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, he promised the opposite. He said that taxes would not go up. Is this NDP Premier a man of his word? Mr. Speaker, I say no, he is not.

The NDP Finance minister was questioned by the media on January 13 of this year as to whether the government knew during the election campaign that taxes would rise. The minister responded that it was outrageous but true. But they couldn't fess up during the campaign because it wouldn't be popular at that time. He has also stated on a different occasion that taxes have to increase because they didn't realize the financial situation the province was in.

Mr. Speaker, the same NDP government, NDP that is government now, were also government before the election. How could they not know? This is proof that the Premier and his government would stoop to any level to retain power. The people of this province feel very betrayed when they compare the NDP's glossy campaign document with the budget.

During the campaign there was fearmongering, senior citizens being told that if a Saskatchewan Party forms government they would have to pay for all their medicines. And incidents such as that, and believe me, Mr. Speaker, there are many more examples, are the only reason that the NDP are government today — fearmongering and, of course, preying on the most vulnerable.

This is a disgrace, and how the members opposite can sleep at night is more than I'll ever know. They are clearly without a conscience.

In my own constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the campaign, the NDP were up to all their old tricks — signs destroyed and/or removed, only to have theirs go up in the identical spot. This was very evident near the Boundary dam power station. I guess the old saying is true, desperate people do desperate things.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the NDP seemed to weasel their way into the Crown corporations to do a little campaigning. The general rule of thumb, at least in my area, is that no campaigning is allowed on these sites. We have asked if we could go out there and we were told, respectfully, no. And we respected that ruling.

But trust the NDP to get in there, and here's how they did it. The minister for SaskPower, who is the member from Regina South, decides that he should pay a visit during the campaign, and takes the NDP candidate as his guest. And I certainly don't blame the management at the Boundary dam power station. Obviously they couldn't tell the minister that he couldn't be there.

But you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it didn't do the NDP one ounce of good, because little did the minister know that a lot of the employees out there are farmers trying to subsidize their income because they can't make a go of it on the farm.

Last Thursday, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Humboldt was responding to the budget, she was speaking of the devastation in rural Saskatchewan. The member from Regina Rosemont chirped from her seat that sometimes grown-ups have to budget.

Well you know, Mr. Speaker, perhaps that's something that this government should try. They waste taxpayers' dollars and then go back to those same taxpayers for more money. In the world the rest of us live in, the buck stops here. We have no one to pass our costs on to.

Mr. Speaker, last weekend when I was putting my thoughts on paper three of my grandchildren were visiting me at my home. And they asked me what I was doing, and I explained it to them and I asked them what they thought. And my grandson said, we have to grow Saskatchewan. And when I asked him how you do that he said, well grandma, we need more population here. And his sister piped up and said we need more people and houses. And when I asked them what else, they said these people have to have jobs; if people have jobs, then they have money and they'll like it here.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these kids aren't very old. Beau just turned nine and Brooke will turn eight next month. But even they realize that we have to grow our economy. But I haven't mentioned this to my grandkids, but I will check with them to see if they're interested in giving the Premier some advice. But it would have to be done on weekends because they're in grade 3 and in grade 2 at school, so maybe we can organize something on the weekend.

Mr. Speaker, last weekend I spent a lot of time on the phone, people calling my home to express their outrage over the arrogance of this government.

On Sunday I was at a local shopping mall and every few steps I took, I was stopped by people who are just sick over the budget. And one person stated to me, he says, you know what, he says, there are one group of people that are happy with this budget. And he says, they are the ones in the U-Haul business, because, he says, they are booked solid by people leaving this province.

Last week the Minister of Environment was responding to questions in question period regarding the NDP's plan to delay or cancel summer. He went on to say that we have a wonderful park system and we should keep them strong. He also didn't know if it was wise to open parks at the usual time, but he'd have to check it out. Why in the world didn't they do that before they made their decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker? He also stated that the parks department got an award for increasing usage by 11 per cent. Well then why shut them down?

Well, Mr. Speaker, in true NDP fashion they cancelled summer. There's an old saying that if you want to see a short summer, borrow some money that's due in the fall. But you know, the NDP have topped that. They just cancelled it.

And believe me, Mr. Speaker, when the parks finally do open and people are sitting around their campfires, that they're now going to have to pay for, perhaps having a glass of suds that they're going to have to pay more for, and they're chatting, I can assure the minister that they will not be talking equalization payments. Chances are they will be wondering what this NDP government is trying to prove, and probably crossing their fingers that this government won't last long.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the NDP Premier and his government don't realize that they have betrayed the people of this province, then I offer them my dictionary. I will mark the pages that define promise, trust, commitment, and responsibility.

And, Mr. Speaker, finally I must respond to some comments that were made yesterday by the Minister of Health in his response to the budget speech. And apparently he was dedicating book titles to members on this side of the House. And the book title he named for me was, *Ring Finger Left Hand*.

Mr. Speaker, I was involved in a lawn mower accident that resulted in my left hand being left in quite a mess. And when he was referring to my ring finger on my left hand, I was wondering if he was referring to the part of the finger that the doctors had to amputate or if he was referring to what the doctors managed to save.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that I did have that accident but if it had to happen I'm glad it happened back then. Because if it happened now I would be on a waiting list and would probably end up losing my complete hand or my arm.

I feel that the minister's remarks were very, very insensitive and I would hope that he'd have the decency to make an apology to me.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you have probably gathered, I will not and do not support the budget, and I will support the amendment put forth by the member from Canora-Pelly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice, the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the budget. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that every budget is made, designed, brought in, within a context. And there are two contexts that I would like to speak briefly about which surround the design and the bringing forward of this budget. One is the issue surrounding equalization and the other, of course, is the issue of federal spending on health and the falling health transfer payments.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, quote from an article written by Thomas Courchene who wrote the Courchene report on equalization that was in the *Globe and Mail* on Thursday, March 4, 2004, earlier this year. Professor Courchene is a professor of economic and financial policy at Queen's University and senior scholar at the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

And he begins his article by setting out what equalization is all

about. And I quote:

Canada's equalization scheme has been called the glue that holds Canada together. When the equalization formula is revealed to be generating problems, the glue just could become unstuck.

Equalization is supposed to work by having the federal government top up the revenues of poorer provinces so that their per-capita revenues are equal to the average per-capita revenues of the five provinces that make up the equalization standard (that is British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec). Equalization's underlying principle — considered so crucial to Canada that it is now constitutionally enshrined — is to ensure that citizens of every province have access to reasonably comparable public services at reasonably comparable tax rates.

(16:45)

Professor Courchene then goes on to describe the particular situation with Saskatchewan. And there's been some discussion in this House and a unanimous resolution has been passed. He sets it out as follows, quote:

The biggest challenge in making equalization work that currently faces Ottawa has to do with the treatment of Saskatchewan's energy revenues. In fiscal year 2000-2001, Saskatchewan's energy revenues totalled about \$1.04-billion. That's just a little more than \$1,000 per capita. The problem is that these energy revenues triggered an even larger decrease in Saskatchewan's equalization entitlements, namely \$1.13-billion — a tax-back rate on the province's energy revenues of 108 per cent. In other words, under the current arrangements, Saskatchewan would not be much worse off if it had no energy revenues whatsoever.

And we heard the Minister of Industry and Resources, the hon. member from Saskatoon Massey Place, talk about the booming mining industry in Saskatchewan and the booming energy industry in Saskatchewan which is taxed back by the federal government at 108 per cent.

The inequities deepen (he goes on to say) when equalization entitlements are compared to revenues on a year-to-year basis. Over the 1998-1999 to 2000-2001 period, energy revenues increased by \$668-million, thanks to energy rising prices. But this led to energy-related equalization offsets of \$835-million. This converts to a marginal claw-back rate on the province's energy revenues of 125 per cent.

One hundred and twenty-five per cent, Mr. Speaker. Professor Courchene goes on to say:

Surely the role of Canada's equalization program is not to expropriate a province's resource endowments. Yet this is precisely what has happened to Saskatchewan's equalization reality.

Professor Courchene goes on to ask, well how did this happen?

And to answer that question:

The primary reason can be traced back to the early 1980s, when Ottawa shifted the formula from an all-provinces (national-average) standard to the present five-province standard. This took oil-rich Alberta out of the equation — and by default, that meant that Saskatchewan would be factored in as a relatively rich energy province for most energy sources. By the very nature of the equalization formula, the province is now subject to higher tax-back rates than was the case when Alberta's energy was factored into the formula.

That's not the only reason, Mr. Speaker. Professor Courchene goes on to give the other reason why Saskatchewan is subject to the unfair equalization formula that does not apply across the rest of the country. There is, quote:

There's yet another reason for Saskatchewan's plight, and it has to do with the way equalization authorities (who report to the federal finance minister) have designed artificially inflated tax bases for several of the energy-revenue categories . . .

The impact of these artificial tax bases has been to increase the equalization offsets for Saskatchewan to an even greater degree, leading to a ridiculous situation wherein a program intended to make Confederation more fair has instead been in effect wholly confiscatory.

Now Professor Courchene doesn't only set out the problem very well, he sets out the solutions.

"How can this situation be remedied?" he asks. Quote:

Two proposals seem appropriate.

The first is a long-term solution: It is simply that the continuing dialogue between Ottawa and the provinces to rework fiscal arrangements be extended to incorporate these tax-back issues, and, indeed, resource equalization in general. There is a rather rich literature to draw on in this area; most suggests that somewhere in the neighbourhood of 25 per cent of resource revenues — rather than the 100 per cent as is now the case — should be eligible to be factored into equalization considerations.

But this approach, while it has much to recommend it, will take time. The second proposal can and should be implemented immediately.

And I close the quote to say, and this is what the Saskatchewan government has demanded. And I may say, Mr. Speaker, in ads that deal with a real problem, the problems set forth by Professor Courchene, not ads paid for by public money which attack health care premiums which don't exist.

Professor Courchene goes on to say:

Starting with the fiscal year 2001-2002, the earliest year for which the equalization books are still open, Saskatchewan's energy revenues should be accorded the

same treatment as the energy revenues in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Specifically, the maximum equalization tax-back rate for each Saskatchewan energy-revenue category should not exceed 70 per cent. Surely that would be more equitable, and more in the spirit of the equalization program.

The other context that I wish to raise in connection with this budget, Mr. Speaker, is the slow but inexorable decline in federal spending on health care, which has declined from 50 cents on the dollar to 16 cents on the dollar. Every province in Canada has protested this — of every political stripe — and they've all participated in an advertising campaign which I guess the members opposite would say is only aimed at one or two people and is a waste of the provincial coffers of each one of those provinces, including the province of Alberta that's participated in calling for the provincial government . . . or federal government to return to something close to an equal share in health care spending.

So those are the two contexts in which we deal with this budget, Mr. Speaker. One, a province that has been at least in one year shortchanged \$300 million in equalization and the other, a decrease in federal funding to 16 cents on the dollar. And it is in that context that this government must address the issues that are of importance to the Saskatchewan people — health and education.

And I know those issues are important to the members opposite because every day at the beginning of the session, Mr. Speaker, in question period particularly, they called on this government to spend more resources, spend more money in health care. Every day they asked that that be done.

And when a budget was brought down, Mr. Speaker, after each one of those days, in which we spent more money in health care, in which we increased spending in health care by 6.3 per cent to a record amount — to 44 cents of our operational spending — then the members who'd been calling for increased spending in health care said, this government spends too much money.

Health care is the number one priority of this government, Mr. Speaker. This government is increasing health care spending by \$160 million, a 6.3 per cent increase. Health care spending as I said, Mr. Speaker, counts for almost 44 cents of every dollar the government spends on programs and services. This government is also increasing education spending by \$45 million, a 3.8 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker.

Within the record \$2.7 billion being spent on health care are an increase of \$223 million in spending. And 72 per cent of that is going to health care, 160 million including, including, Mr. Speaker: \$115 million for salaries, benefits, medical fees for service to help attract and retain qualified health professionals; \$46 million in facilities and equipment including \$27 million capital and \$19 million in diagnostic equipment. And we've heard the announcement on the new MRI, Mr. Speaker; \$6.6 million more to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency; and \$1 million for prevention projects enhancing diagnosis and assessment for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and other cognitive disabilities. Also, Mr. Speaker, there are 72 more training seats in the Nursing Education Program and there's

funding to the Kids First program for 60 new families to enter the prenatal program and receive support.

This is a budget, Mr. Speaker, that focuses on health and education, focuses on children and youth and opportunity. A budget in which we spent \$2.7 billion in health and \$1.2 billion for education — a 3.8 per cent increase over last year, as I said, Mr. Speaker.

That includes \$24 million in capital improvements for K to 12 schools and \$60 million for post-secondary institutions. It involves increasing the post-secondary graduate tax credit to \$1,000 over four years. In 2004, the tax credit will go up from \$350 to \$500.

It includes launching the Young Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan program, creating 200 new child care spaces, and increasing the child benefit payments for single parents, Mr. Speaker.

And this is a budget that supports communities. An investment of \$295 million to fix roads and build better highways, resurfacing 325 kilometres of highways, continuing to twin the Trans-Canada and the Yellowhead highways, and a further \$10 million in revenue-sharing grants for municipalities — a 13 per cent increase over last year. And it also includes, Mr. Speaker, \$12.6 million for affordable housing construction under the provincial housing policy framework.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak just briefly about the justice initiatives in the budget. Keeping communities safe is a top priority of this government. And we will take measures and we will bring legislation into this House to improve community safety by introducing new civil remedies to help our community and policing partners. Our initiatives will target unlawful activities in our communities, and working with our municipal and community partners we will send a clear message that such activities will not be tolerated in Saskatchewan. When fully implemented, four investigators will support the new legislation.

The 2004-2005 budget provides \$95.4 million to maintain and expand policing services, Mr. Speaker. This is an increase of \$4.6 million, or 5.4 per cent over last year and includes funding for five additional police positions to support Aboriginal communities. Since 1999, we've increased provincial funding for police services by \$26 million including funding 151 additional policing positions.

This budget responds, Mr. Speaker, to the Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform by providing \$250,000 for the office of the police complaint investigator and \$126,000 for the expansion of the Aboriginal court worker program.

As well, five additional police officers are funded by Aboriginal policing. That is nine new police officers provided by the provincial government in this budget — the four officers who will support the safer communities legislation and initiative, and the five additional Aboriginal police officers.

To a certain extent, Mr. Speaker, the criminal justice system is similar to acute health care, and to a certain extent, Mr. Speaker, it shows a failure to prevent crime. And we need to

spend what we are spending in Aboriginal policing in measures to improve the safety of our neighbourhoods. We also need to address issues at their root. And that is why I am proud — and I think the members opposite from some comments they would make would be supportive — of the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder initiative that this government has begun with this budget to identify victims of fetal alcohol syndrome and effect, and to assist them and to help them work towards building a life that does not involve confrontation with the criminal justice system.

That is why I am supportive of the strategies of this government that encourage community attachment and school attachment. I am particularly proud of the housing strategy that has been announced in this budget where we are providing 12.6 million new dollars for housing. I am also proud of the \$1.5 million being added to Kids First and early childhood initiative for families facing challenges.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, this budget in health, in education, in justice, in addressing the problems of fetal alcohol syndrome, addressing the problems of failure of community attachment, home attachment, home ownership, in addressing the challenges faced by single-parent families, this budget represents a fulfillment of the promise of the Throne Speech.

And I spoke in my response to the Throne Speech that I was proud to be part of a government that could make tough decisions. And there were tough decisions here, Mr. Speaker. The sales tax increase of \$130 million doesn't quite cover the \$160 million increase to health care. But it was a necessary decision because, as every member of this House agrees, health care needed those resources. So we made tough decisions. But they're governed by compassion. The budget reflects that. They're inspired, as I said in response to the Throne Speech, they're inspired by creativity.

(17:00)

We have a Throne Speech and a budget where tough decisions are made, governed by compassion, inspired by creativity. I supported the Speech from the Throne. I support the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to speaking on the budget. Mr. Speaker, the budget and the Throne Speech was a betrayal to all people in Saskatchewan.

We talk about a rural and urban split in the past few years. But with the NDP government bringing down this budget it . . . they treated everyone the same. They betrayed everyone — everyone in urban centres, everyone in rural centres. They betrayed people in the North; they betrayed people in the South; they betrayed young and old.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's very disconcerting to the people of Saskatchewan to see this budget come down, and especially when we look at the campaign that the NDP ran in the last

provincial election. The Premier and the NDP ran a fraudulent campaign and now we see that the Saskatchewan people are paying the price in this budget.

People all across this province are now going to be having an increase of 1 per cent on the PST which affects everyone in the province, every business in the province. And again we see that this is another step by the NDP that will drive people out of the province instead of attracting people to the province.

What we need is an economic strategy in this province, Mr. Speaker, to bring people back to Saskatchewan, encourage investment in Saskatchewan, encourage businesses to set up their business in Saskatchewan. And all this budget has done and this government has done is chase more people away and really put up the stop sign at the borders of Saskatchewan, where people do not feel that they are welcome in this province to set up businesses and to bring their families.

And this is what we need in this province, is a strategy to broaden the tax base, to bring more taxpayers in, to have more taxes for the government to spend on health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, this government didn't expect to win the election last fall and they are conducting themselves in that same mould. Mr. Speaker, before the election, the NDP government were just managing decline, just hoping to get to the election and get through it. Now with a surprise win by the NDP government again, what are they doing? They're managing decline. That's all they can do. They have no plan for growth in this province, no plan for the long-term future of the people of Saskatchewan, and of the economy of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this budget hit hard the people of Biggar constituency. Mr. Speaker, in the town of Biggar, the rural service centre will be closed and the conservation office will be closed. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a serious setback to the community of Biggar and the surrounding area.

The rural service centre has been a fixture in Biggar for generations, quite frankly. And now not only do we lose two employees that, direct employees in the town of Biggar, but we also are losing their families and the income that their families . . . and jobs and taxes that those people bring to the economy as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Biggar were very concerned to see the closure of the rural service centre. And as we know, there's been a closure of 22 different rural services centres across the province. And this rural service centre is very important to the area, an agriculture area like Biggar constituency is, where the local rural service centre provided very important service to the farming community — setting up meetings, bringing guests in to speak, seminars, and always having that office open in Biggar where people could access information about government services or the latest problems in crop production, disease related.

And the local agrologist, Glenn Barclay, was well liked in the province. He and his wife and family lived in Biggar for a number of years and he was always on call to go out to farmers' fields and look at crop diseases or help with their farming needs. And his services are going to be sadly missed.

And the same thing with the conservation officer, one conservation officer in the town of Biggar serving a large area. The fellow's name is Doug Lucyshyn, and another person that served the area well, and now he and his family will be pulling up roots and leaving the province, Mr. Speaker, and moving on to other areas.

Mr. Speaker, now we come to something that is very critical now that we've seen the loss of our rural service centre and the conservation office. But now there's talk of downsizing of hospitals and closures. And just to quote from the government's own news release:

... changes in health delivery are required and will include further administrative efficiencies, changes in staff mix, facility closures or conversions, and reductions in long-term care bed numbers.

Mr. Speaker, this is devastating to the people of Biggar constituency and people are very concerned in the Biggar constituency.

In the town of Biggar we have a hospital, a special care home, of course ambulance and EMT (emergency medical technician) service. In the town of Wilkie, health centre with attached special care home. Those two communities are in the Heartland Regional Health Authority. In the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, there's Borden with a health centre, Lang with a special care home, and Delisle with a health centre.

Mr. Speaker, people in those communities are very concerned about adequate health care, and always seen from the government in the past when they close hospitals or the word conversions take place that means less service for the people in those communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, if — and I say if — there was some benefit to the province as a whole by moving people out of rural areas into health services in the cities, what we could say, well at least there's some improvement. But what we've seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, when the government has closed hospitals and had conversions of facilities, all we seen, all we saw was increased waiting lists in the main urban centres, in the hospitals.

And, Mr. Speaker, I do not see and the people of Biggar constituency don't see the government making any changes to improve that situation. All they see is losses back home in their area and no improvement in the health care facility.

Mr. Speaker, since the budget was announced there's been a number of calls and inquiries to my office that are concerned about the rural service centre, the closure of the conservation office. But other cutbacks in agriculture are also very, very important, and the elimination of the farm fuel tax on gasoline and propane bought at retail outlets, 20 per cent reduction in the rebate on bulk farm fuel purchases — Mr. Speaker, this is at a time when agriculture is really at a crisis.

We have the serious BSE situation with the border still closed to the markets around the world. In our area in particular, it's still the drought area. We've had some moisture but it's going to be a dry spring unless we get rain soon. We've had the

government raise our crop insurance premiums and now with this budget we're losing rebate money from the farm fuel purchase, the cancellation of livestock and horticultural facility initiative programs.

It just goes on and on, Mr. Speaker, the closures and the cutbacks, including not only in agriculture but the 12 provincial parks will not open till mid-June. And something that really affects the health of people and the safety of the people of Saskatchewan, they're also talking about increasing water testing fees, Mr. Speaker. So rural Saskatchewan has been hit very hard and the people of Biggar constituency has been hit very hard.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Biggar constituency have asked me to bring their concerns to the legislature. And through petitions that will be coming soon concerning the loss of the rural service centre and the conservation office in Biggar, and also the possible closures of health care facilities and conversion of health care facilities, Mr. Speaker, the people of Biggar constituency are beginning a letter-writing campaign and will be signing hundreds of petitions. And I will be more than happy to bring them to the legislature and present them to the government, and relay the concerns of the ... Biggar constituency has towards these cutbacks in the Biggar constituency and rural Saskatchewan in general.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen that the government has betrayed the people of Saskatchewan. They have no long-term plan and the people of Saskatchewan are very, very concerned.

I'm getting calls all the time at the office, wondering about the upcoming non-confidence vote on Thursday. And they're hoping and they're wishing that this government would fall, so that changes can be made to improve this province, instead of continuing on the same road that we're on of decline and cutbacks and increased taxes to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this budget, but I will be supporting the amendment brought forward by the member from Canora-Pelly. And at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Biggar that the debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:11.

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