

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
First Session — Nineteenth Legislature

Wednesday, March 14, 1979

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

On the Orders of the Day

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. G. TAYLOR (Indian Head-Wolseley): — I would like to introduce to you and through you, to this Assembly, 15 members of the Wolseley commercial class who are seated in the east gallery, and their teacher, Miss June Dewar, and the bus driver, Mr. Ken Pekrul. I am sure you have all heard of Wolseley High School which is perhaps one of the most famous high schools in rural Saskatchewan. It is the one I happen to be principal of and I would like you to give a warm welcome to these fine young students.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. E. L. TCHORZEWSKI (Humboldt): — I too, would like to join with the members in extending greetings to the students from the Wolseley High School.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for granting the hon. members a brief respite from their official duties in order to welcome a group of very distinguished guests to this Assembly. These citizens, Mr. Speaker, are embarked upon an assignment which is as promising as it is challenging, for they are the members of the provincial Celebrate Saskatchewan Committee. I will not introduce all of them to you individually because as you see, there is quite a large number of them, but I would like to table, for the record, a list of their names and their occupations, and their places of residence.

I note from the files of the Celebrate Saskatchewan corporation, Mr. Speaker, that when the hon. member for Regina Centre (Mr. Shillington), my desk mate, welcomed the committee members to their first meeting, he referred to them as a blue ribbon collection of citizens. Mr. Speaker, I accept that for this is indeed a blue ribbon collection of citizens.

Speaking historically for a moment if I may, there was an earlier time in far off places when a citizen was known by the level of his inherited rank. It was to escape artificial standards of that nature that many of our grandparents settled this new land, and what they sought was equality under the law. From my observations, and I am sure the members will agree with me, they found it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — They passed it on to succeeding generations as a cornerstone of our heritage. Today in Saskatchewan, one of the measures of rank for any woman or man is what she or he contributes to community service. This is a natural extension of the tradition of co-operation. With us this afternoon is a group of Saskatchewan citizens who are noted for their

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continuing contribution to our province. They have earned a high standing through their voluntary efforts on behalf of the groups and clubs and associations which form our social fabric and through the services they have willingly provided in their home communities. Now, working as a group, these citizens of distinction have accepted a new challenge. They are giving form and substance to an idea — an idea that has been developed successfully in the past on several occasions, and that idea, Mr. Speaker, is based upon a belief that the people of the province can find new strengths for the future through learning more about the strengths which are in their inheritance. It is possible to do this by encouraging love of heritage, a heritage too often neglected in the pressures of modern day life. The Celebrate Saskatchewan Program which is under the most capable direction of today's guests is based upon a foundation of three equal parts. It is designed to pay homage to all people who made this land what it is today. It will tell our residents, all of our residents, more about Saskatchewan today. It will encourage our people to give some considerations to their future as individuals, and collectively as the people of a province, one of extraordinary promise. Mr. Speaker, together these three elements comprise the basis of our celebrations in 1980. They represent our past, our present, our future.

One final comment, Mr. Speaker, which I believe to be vital to our future success, vital to the success of our celebrations. It seems that past successes of our provincial celebrations have left us with a jubilee heritage, one I commend to all the members of this House. It is of great interest to me, Mr. Speaker, to read from the records in the provincial library that in 1955 and 1965 and again in 1971 the dates of earlier successful celebrations, the guidance and the direction for those major events came from citizens, both elected and non-elected, who in their anniversary endeavours laid aside all partisan considerations. They were guided by a desire to help all of Saskatchewan — all regions, all creeds. all political persuasions.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this spirit to all the hon. members of this House and present to you and this Assembly our Celebrate Saskatchewan Committee, and I know all members will join with me in extending a warm welcome to these Saskatchewan citizens and offering to them our best wishes for every success in their work.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. R.L. COLLVER (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister of Health (Mr. Tchorzewski) in welcoming the delegates and the committee for Celebrate Saskatchewan in 1980.

It's always been a concern to me that when the fiftieth wedding anniversary rolls around it's a golden anniversary, when the sixtieth wedding anniversary rolls around it's the diamond anniversary, and yet we're celebrating our diamond jubilee in 1975 — or 1980. I think it's indicative of the quality of the committee that the minister has assembled and that the government has assembled — of these fine, high spirited citizens of Saskatchewan who have joined together in a non-partisan way to help all of Saskatchewan celebrate — that it won't just be a diamond celebration in 1980, it will be a double diamond ceremony. I think that's what they call it when people have been married 75 years, and I think that's what we should call it — a double diamond ceremony for celebrating Saskatchewan.

HON. E.B. SHILLINGTON (Minister of Education): — I want to introduce to you and through you to the House, the executive secretary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF), Sterling McDowell, who is in your gallery. Over the years the STF has

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been one of those organizations which has made a giant contribution to education in this province and I think it is fair to say that Mr. McDowell is thought of as one of the more illustrious of the executive secretaries. I would like to introduce to you and to the House, Sterling McDowell.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — As one who played a role in the Celebrate Saskatchewan activities, I would like to join my colleagues in the legislature in welcoming him to the House.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Indian Head-Wolseley): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister of Education in welcoming Dr. McDowell to the Assembly today. I have known Dr. McDowell for a number of years and I have always admired his work in education. I would like you to stand so that the students can all see who you are, Dr. McDowell, please.

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. R. PICKERING (Bengough-Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 20 students in the east gallery from the Lyndale School in Oungre, Saskatchewan. Oungre is located in the extreme southeast corner of my constituency. They are accompanied here today by their teacher, Mr. Singh, and bus driver, Lorne Bjorklund.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of this Assembly to join with me in wishing them an educational and enjoyable afternoon and, of course, a safe journey home.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to just for a very brief moment also introduce some people associated with Celebrate Saskatchewan which I did not do in my earlier remarks. The staff from Celebrate Saskatchewan is here because we have a meeting of this committee and I would like them to rise in the Speaker's gallery so that we could extend to them our greetings as well.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

Land around Cities Zoned as Agricultural

MR. R. KATZMAN (Rosthern): — A question to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Romanow) in the absence of several other ministers. In accordance with a statement made by the member for Saskatoon Mayfair (Mr. Dyck) in this House, is it the policy of the provincial government to zone all land around the city as agricultural and to expropriate the land at agriculture prices? Is that the policy of this government?

HON. R.J. ROMANOW (Attorney General): — Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to answer yes or no or maybe to that question since I am not certain what statement the hon. member is referring to when he refers to a speech given by the member for Saskatoon Mayfair. May I say before the member gets up and presents me with a quotation, members will know that all members in this House are free to express their opinions as

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to the matters which affect the province and the people of the province. I was not present for all of the speech of the member for Saskatoon Mayfair (Mr. Dyck). No doubt he has some views on use of land — agricultural land, urban land — just like some of your members do.

MR. KATZMAN: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The member for Mayfair's statement was that all land around cities should be zoned agricultural and expropriated. No doubt you are aware that the zoning responsibility is with the municipal governments in Saskatchewan. Is this statement by the NDP member an attempt to coerce the municipalities into zoning policies, or is the government about to take over zoning all over the province?

MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again I don't want to quibble on a technicality, but the hon. member is asking me, as a representative of the government, to give an answer for something that a private member has indicated to the House. I understand the rules of the House in question period to be that I am to answer to matters which relate to government administration policy.

For one thing, I don't accept the hon. member's interpretation of what the member for Mayfair said. I am under the impression that the member for Mayfair said somebody should be giving consideration — whether it's the provincial government or municipal government — to doing this, is the word that I understand. As an example, obviously the members from the PC caucus don't accept that interpretation. That's why I think the quality of that kind of question arises.

MR. KATZMAN: — New question, Mr. Speaker. In lieu of the statements made by the Attorney General, am I to assume that the government of Saskatchewan's new policy, as was stated last night, is to zone land around cities agricultural and then expropriate at agricultural prices. Is that your new policy, yes or no?

MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is clearly no, and I also want to point out to members of the House what I think is, with all due respect, an unfortunate aspect to phrasing questions. The member says that the member for Saskatoon Mayfair says something, according to his interpretation. Is this now the government policy that the member has announced? The simple fact of the matter is that government policy is announced by a member of the Treasury benches, in due course. There is no policy announcement by the member for Saskatoon Mayfair.

Campaign Policy

MR. J.G. LANE (Qu'Appelle): — Question to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General not admit that his government office has taken the policy, and I refer to the last election campaign, of taking a statement from an individual member and then throwing it out as being the policy of a particular party? Now, it's a practice I think the Attorney General participated in. Would the Attorney General not admit that that was a fair question on the part of the opposite members?

MR. SPEAKER: — Take the next question.

Leasing Land from Land Bank

MR. R. ANDREW (Kindersley): — Question to the Attorney General in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kaeding). I've been informed of a situation in the

Strasbourg area where a farmer sold six quarters of land to the land bank, and then leased the land back himself. Subsequently, a short period — perhaps a year later or less than a year later — he took the proceeds of this sale and purchased a \$380,000 apartment building in Regina. Now, could you tell me if that is common place and is that part of the practices accepted with land bank?

MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I am going to take the position with respect to this question and to questions of this nature, that I'll want to see the facts upon which the question is predicated. I would ask the hon. member to give me the details of the purchases, the details of the transaction, upon which I'll be prepared to respond.

May I make a general observation not related to this particular case, be it real or imagined. And that is that when a person sells property, be it to the land bank or to, say, Andrew and Ritter, or whoever it happens to be, what they do with that money, I think is their business. I certainly don't think that the PC caucus is saying that government should be interfering on the sellers matter in this regard.

MR. ANDREW: — Supplementary question. The members opposite tend to make a lot to do that they are the only people who stand by the family farm. I ask the member does that illusive definition of the family farm now include apartment buildings in the cities of Saskatoon and Regina?

Delay in Presentation of Documents

MR. R. PICKERING (Bengough-Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture, I'll direct my question to the Hon. Attorney General. I've made a repeated request from the Department of Agriculture, Lands Branch as to the amount of land purchased in three municipalities. I was advised it would be forthcoming immediately. That was last week. I ask you, Mr. Attorney General, would you convey this message to the minister and have him provide me with that information immediately?

MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the question is yes. I will make sure that the Department of Agriculture provides this answer as soon as is reasonably possible to the member. I don't think there is any obvious effort to withhold this information.

May I say, before I take my place, Mr. Speaker, that today is the convention of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. It is the custom and convention of this House that members of the government attend in substantial numbers for such an important convention; that explains the absence of the several ministers today.

MR. COLLVER: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary. I can appreciate the Deputy Premier's comment about the SARM. Certainly, some of our members are also attending the SARM convention. We are not trying to make a big thing out of that.

We are however, attempting to make a big thing out of the fact that members and ministers responsible to this legislature state in this legislature that they will provide information, state in this legislature that they will table documents. Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is, has the Attorney General been apprised of the agreed upon tabling of the script that the Minister of Finance used in his budget leak that was to have been tabled here? Has he been apprised of what's happened to that document that was to have been tabled in this legislature?

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MR. SPEAKER: — I'll take a new question.

Discrepancy in University Grant Increase

MR. TAYLOR: — My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Finance. In your budget speech you stated that the school and university grant will increase by 7.6 per cent. However the University of Regina officials stated that this is not true and that they will only receive a 6.9 per cent increase. Why did you, Mr. Minister, give such an obvious misleading figure?

HON. W.E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance): — Mr. Speaker, I stand by my figure. The amount of money that has been provided to the universities and to the school boards as grants is an increase of 7.6 per cent.

MR. TAYLOR: — A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. That is not the figure of the university. We are advised that the actual 6.9 per cent increase will not allow the University of Regina to meet known wage increases and that there will be a reduction in programs. What action have you taken to insure no such cutbacks?

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Speaker, what's interesting about the Conservatives is that during the debate of the budget they are making allegations that we are spending too much money and that we should be cutting back, obviously that we should be cutting back on universities and schools and municipalities — that's their line.

We have provided the university and school systems with much more money this year. We believe the money that has been appropriated will meet the needs of our university and our education system. The amount, in both cases, is an increase of 7.6 per cent, at a time when in the school system the student population has dropped. On a per student basis, in our school system, the grant is 10 per cent more this year than last year. In the case of the university, because of the drop in the student population of an estimated 3.2 per cent, the increase on a per student basis at the university will be 11.1 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TAYLOR: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I could advise that maybe you could cut some of your government advertising if you want to save money. We are further advised that, due to your cutbacks, the newly established school of journalism will not proceed and there will be cuts in French and biology and also in the school of fine arts and the school of design. What action will you take to prevent this?

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Speaker, may I also inform the House that in relation to other provinces the province of Saskatchewan is providing larger increases; for example, Tory Ontario is only providing an increase of 4.8 per cent and Tory Manitoba an increase of only 5.8 per cent. Saskatchewan is committed to an increase of 7.6 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SMISHEK: — In addition to that, the matters of what kinds of courses and instructions and who is going to be hired and the number of people to instruct and be hired are matters to be determined by the university. We believe that universities are autonomous bodies and they have the right to make those decisions. Our job is to provide the necessary funding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Services Provided by Universities

MR. R.L. COLLVER (Leader of the Opposition): — A supplementary question. Mr. Speaker. In the light of the minister's just stated comments and the fact that he has tried once again to utilize statistics to overcome what the universities have attempted to tell him and the Minister for Continuing Education (Mr. Shillington) for some time — that there is no direct relationship, is the minister aware that the University's Commission and the boards of the universities have provided him with information to believe that there is no direct linear relationship between the number of students today and the cost of operating universities today. Is the minister aware the universities have informed the people of the province and the government of the province that they also provide other services such as research and planning for the future and future enrolments that necessitate expenditure of funds in order to maintain the high levels they wish to attain in the province of Saskatchewan?

MR. SMISHEK: — Mr. Speaker, I am indeed aware that the universities provide for research. I am indeed aware that our universities are making every effort to provide a very high standard of education for the students at the universities. That, Mr. Speaker, is pretty obvious and in fact we, as a government, have seen to it over the years that good quality education is provided at all levels of our education system and we are pretty proud of it, Mr. Speaker . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SMISHEK: — . . . and certainly we have a good communication system between the Department of Continuing Education and the Department of Education at all levels. I think that our record speaks for itself. We are pretty proud of our universities, even though the Tories may not be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Air Service between Saskatoon and Regina on Weekends

MR. J. GARNER (Wilkie): — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Tourism and Renewable Resources (Mr. Matsalla). Since the minister has made representation to many airlines for reduced fares, can the minister tell me whether his department has been in touch with any of the major air carriers in the province to provide a service between Regina and Saskatoon on the weekends?

HON. A. MATSALLA (Minister of Tourism and Renewable Resources): — Mr. Speaker, no I have not.

MR. GARNER: — Is the minister aware of the opening of a new airport facility in the city of North Battleford at a cost of \$300,000? Yet, they have no regular air service between the North and the South of Saskatchewan. What actions are you going to do, or what are you planning to do about air service for that city?

MR. MATSALLA: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to providing air service for North Battleford, I have made representations in that regard; but up until this point in time the statistics indicate the use of the air service from North Battleford doesn't warrant the

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establishment of a flight. Further studies are being continued and until the time the studies indicated to the airline services that there is going to be sufficient patronage for the service there isn't going to be a flight established. Once there is sufficient patronage or sufficient interest indicated then consideration will be given to establishing a flight from North Battleford onto the other major cities.

MR. GARNER: — Is the minister trying to tell me then that there wouldn't be sufficient usage of aircraft between the cities of Saskatoon and Regina in the province? Does he also not realize that with no air service in the province, this is affecting not only business trade but tourist trade as well? Then he comes out with a news release commending the air carriers on reduced rates. What is the point of having reduced rates if we don't have service in the province?

MR. MATSALLA: — Mr. Speaker, it is not that easy to provide air services as the hon. member indicates. There certainly is air service between Saskatoon and Regina. Perhaps there isn't on a weekend. I think our airline companies would be willing to provide this service providing there is sufficient patronage for the service. This applies to North Battleford as well.

MR. LANE: — A supplementary to the minister. Do you not feel that you as the minister responsible for tourism in this province have an obligation and a duty, particularly to the people of Saskatoon and Regina, to have a regularly scheduled weekend air service and do you not think that you have been negligent in your duty in not making any representations to the air lines involved, for a very necessary service?

MR. MATSALLA: — Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite don't realize that it cost money to provide airline services. Certainly, for us to make representation to the air line companies to provide the services is very simple, but at the same time I think we have to be realistic as to whether or not this air line service is going to be something that the companies will accept.

MR. COLLVER: — A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In the light of the minister's just mentioned difficulties of finance, is he aware that Air Canada has scheduled a jet service from Toronto through Regina to Saskatoon within the last few months, that they refuse to pick up passengers in Regina? Has the minister made any representations at all to Air Canada or to the Government of Canada to suggest that that might help in some ways, at no extra cost, to alleviate the problem of travel between Regina and Saskatoon?

MR. MATSALLA: — Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the point that the hon. member raises.

Answer to question on Government Employees

HON. W.E. SMISHEK (Minister of Finance): — Mr. Speaker, on Monday last, the hon. member for Regina South (Mr. Rousseau) raised a question of the disparity between the number of government employees, of permanent and non-permanent, that are estimated in our budget address on page 33 and those that are reported by Statistics Canada.

For the information of the member, as I indicated, that Statistics Canada asks for information. We provide it during the months July or August where we have the largest

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number of part-time employees. The other significant thing, Mr. Speaker, is that the federal government includes in their figures university employees and university hospital employees. Our analysis and our checking proved that, therefore, the numbers are much greater.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Collver), asked on Monday last, the number of out-of-scope employees employed by the government. On February 28, 1979 the number that were out-of-scope employees was 2,216.

ADJOURNED DEBATE

BUDGET DEBATE

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Mr. Smishek (Minister of Finance) that this Assembly do now resolve itself into a Committee of Finance.

HON. E.L. TCHORZEWSKI (Minister of Health): — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in support of the budget presented by the Minister of Finance last Thursday. This budget shows the positive and knowledgeable understanding by this government of the social, economic and financial complexities of our province. In 1971 the New Democratic Party government was elected to office to provide positive leadership. In seven years it has provided the leadership necessary to organize public programs which have been responsive and effective. The budget we are considering in this debate is once again positive proof of the leadership we are providing in effective government organization responsive to the needs of the people, ensuring the people that they will get their best value for their tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate the Minister of Finance on the quality of the budget address he presented last Thursday and in the exemplary manner in which he delivered that budget address. Any budget by government is a setting of priorities, a place where political promises should take concrete action. This budget sets priorities and takes concrete action, action to improve the economic and the social well-being of our province and our people. It shows an application of good judgment by this government rather than the panic knee-jerk reactions we have seen at the federal level and some other provincial levels in a so-called effort to restrain expenditures. Our approach has enabled this NDP government of Saskatchewan to meet the needs of today in this budget while at the same time planning ahead with a vision for the future — future generations are not being forgotten for the sake of immediate expenditures today. This can only happen with careful planning and positive leadership and since 1971 this province has had both.

I am pleased that this budget reflects the government's commitment to maintain the present high standard of health care in Saskatchewan; moreover it also makes provision for the development of new health initiatives and new services. Once again, an NDP government has placed health services as a very high priority in its provincial budget. A health budget of \$471.3 million is an 8.2 per cent increase over last year's estimate, an increase of \$35.7 million. We are sustaining and expanding health programs in Saskatchewan at a time when Conservative governments across Canada are chopping up health services, cutting on health services, imposing deterrent fees and other charges to patients closing hospitals and threatening stricter limits on the availability of some services — like drug benefits in Ontario for example. Yet other

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Conservative provinces are allowing situations to arise which are threatening the accessibility to health services of Canadians. In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, physicians have many freedoms in their billing practices, and these freedoms do not exist in most other provinces like Manitoba or Ontario for example. And to date, these billing freedoms have not threatened the fundamental practice of equal accessibility to health services. If ever the principle should be at stake an NDP government would consider the matter a major threat to our health system — a threat which we would not be prepared to tolerate.

At the present time discussions are taking place between the Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) and the Medical Care Insurance Commission to establish a new fee schedule for 1979. These discussions have been taking place for some time and it is, therefore, understandable that there is some concern among both parties and the general public. I am pleased that the SMA and the Medical Care Insurance Commission have agreed on the services of a very respected and capable mediator, Judge Alistair Muir. He has been working with both parties since his acceptance of the role of mediator, and I'm hopeful that with his assistance we shall soon have an agreement.

There has been concern expressed about some physicians billing directly under the mode 3 method, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to say that although there has been some increase in mode 3 billing, that increase has been minimal. And this, Mr. Speaker, I believe is an indication of the dedication of the vast majority of our physicians to the importance of universal accessibility to good quality health care by every man, woman and child in Saskatchewan, and to them I express my commendation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — I am confident that when a new fee schedule is established, many of the physicians who have been direct billing will stop that practice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, our approach to the funding of health programs and services is based on the firm belief that the financing of medical services should be accomplished through the personal income tax system and from the benefits of resource revenues rather than through the present system of premiums as done in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, which in our view is regressive, inequitable, needlessly expensive to administer, and ineffective as a deterrent to possible abuse.

Mr. Speaker, health care is a social good. It should not be an insurance program. And the premium paid in some provinces is not even remotely connected with the state of health of the insured. Health care is a universally accessible social good to all residents, and not a selective misoriented service. And therefore the means of financing it should respect this fact. Health care is a basic necessity of life and it should be accessible to all regardless of the income or status of the client. And we in the New Democratic Party are convinced that the regressive premium tax and deterrent fee is neither forward nor efficient.

The best way I can state our government's commitment to medicare is to quote the late Woodrow Lloyd:

Medical services are essential to health and to life itself. Good medical services are part of the basis for a healthy, productive economy. Medical

care is not an optional commodity — it is a necessity. And when medical services are needed they should not, in the interest of each of us or for all of us, be denied to any of us.

From time to time, Mr. Speaker, opponents of medicare criticize it by alleging that it is inefficient. Mr. Speaker, that argument is full of holes. The administration of our medicare program is the showpiece of efficiency. In 1977 the administrative costs, as a percentage of the total program costs for medicare, were 4.3 per cent. I ask members of the opposition to compare before they so freely criticize our medicare program in this province. Private plans are much more costly than our public plan. For example, in 1976 Kaiser Permanent in the United States reported 9 per cent of its total budget spent on administration, and in 1972 United States, data showed that the rate was as high as 21.4 per cent for some private insurance companies. In Canada, we spent 7.2 percent of our gross national product on health services. In the United States it is over 8 per cent, and yet in this country our services are more comprehensive and no one needs to fear that he might need medical care. There is universal accessibility, especially in this province.

While Saskatchewan people no longer face the fear of catastrophic medical costs, in the United States there are 50,000 personal bankruptcies each year as a result of bills for health services, not to mention the untold thousands of families living in financial hardship because they are sacrificing to pay such bills.

Mr. Speaker, it was a proud day for this province when Senator Edward Kennedy asked that we send some families to Washington to testify before their committee studying the possibilities of a medicare program for our neighbors to the south of us. Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of our government to develop programs which will assist all of the people to remain healthy so that they do not require the expensive treatment services. When people do become sick, we shall assist them to overcome their health deficiency difficulties without discrimination or penalty.

The services provided by our community health programs, our Feeling Good health promotion program, and new home care program are all examples of a determination to focus more and more on preventative health. While putting this emphasis on the prevention of sickness, Mr. Speaker, we have not neglected improvements in our hospital system. In addition to the \$35.7 million increase in the health budget over last year's estimate, \$1.2 million will be provided by the heritage fund to purchase a linear accelerator for the Regina cancer clinic. This equipment provides high precision radiation therapy and will further enhance the quality of our cancer treatment program.

There is another \$2.6 million for health capital projects found in the Department of Government Services budget, and in the Department of Northern Saskatchewan budget, \$2.9 million has been provided for health operating costs. Therefore, our province is actually providing \$478 million for health programs. Operating funds provided to the Saskatchewan hospitals by this budget increases by \$12.25 million to \$265.25 million. This provides an overall increase of funding to Saskatchewan hospitals and other related programs financed by Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan of 9.5 per cent over 1978 — 79 actual expenditures. This compares, Mr. Speaker, very well to the 5 per cent that is being provided in provinces like Ontario.

Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, to assist the opposition to understand the administrative overhead costs in the hospital plan, we have separated in the estimates the grant to hospitals from the grant for administration and the grant for the administration

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increases in this year by only 2.9 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I listened with great care to the comments by the member who is a Conservative spokesman for their health policies yesterday. In the usual Conservative politicizing which only they are capable of doing so well, he listed one thing that a Tory government would do to make government more efficient. Only one offer did he make and the net result of it, Mr. Speaker, would be to place a larger burden for health costs on individuals and in particular, on senior citizens. He said, Mr. Speaker, in no uncertain terms when I asked him, 'We will put in the Manitoba plan' and he was referring to the drug plan. He was saying on behalf of his party that Conservatives would replace the Saskatchewan drug plan with the Manitoba pharmacy plan. He said that the Manitoba plan cost \$10 million less than the Saskatchewan plan, Mr. Speaker, and in his analysis, he either deliberately or unknowingly left out the drugs that Manitoba provided to welfare recipients, to nursing homes and for special benefits. For the Saskatchewan figure he used all of the components of our plan and if he had told the whole story it would have been clear that the difference in cost is far less than \$10 million. Critics like him always mention the cost of pharmacare in Manitoba, but neglect to mention other Manitoba expenditures for drugs.

Mr. Speaker, there is good reason why the amount of money we budgeted for our drug plan is modestly more than in Manitoba and let me explain that reason. Our drug plan, for example, in 1976-77, provided help for 334,363 families and that number is larger in this year. The Manitoba Pharmacare Plan was of benefit to only 67,763 families and our populations are basically the same. With the Tory health critic's announcement yesterday, Mr. Speaker, he told Saskatchewan people clearly that a Conservative government would eliminate almost 200,000 families from the Saskatchewan Prescription Drug Plan. Mr. Speaker, we do not share that point of view.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Under a program such as Manitoba's, consumers must pay the full cost of the prescription, save and submit the prescription receipts and then wait for their money. Because of this many people who are eligible for benefits do not apply and this problem is most severe among the elderly and the chronically ill. In Saskatchewan, the administration is handled by the pharmacy and the drug plan thus assuring benefits to all eligible residents. The cost to patients in Saskatchewan is substantially less. For example, a patient with asthma who uses four Intal capsules a day would pay \$29 per year in our province, compared to \$117 in Manitoba under their plan. Yesterday, the Conservatives in the opposition made it clear they would force that Saskatchewan asthma patient to pay \$98 more for his pills than he pays at the present time in this province. Mr. Speaker, Conservatives might reduce government expenditures, but they would do it by putting those costs on individuals least able to pay — the poor, the old and the sick.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TCHORZEWSKI: — Mr. Speaker, the budget not only provides funds for maintaining existing programs; it also allows for new initiatives.

It is always a pleasure to announce that funds will be available for a much needed program. I know the member who is the health critic in the opposition benches will be interested that such is the case for the \$134,000 which is allocated for the

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establishment of an ostomy program in Saskatchewan this year. This program will serve several purposes. Individuals who undergo such an operation have an ongoing need for certain supplies and equipment to help them cope with their condition. In the past the cost of these supplies was the patient's responsibility. The new ostomy program will cover 50 per cent of these costs and this part of the program will come under the auspices of our Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living program.

Another new initiative is our hemophiliac home treatment program. Although this program will meet the needs of a very small number of people I know that it will be welcomed by many more. Funds have been included in the budget to assist hemophiliac patients to follow their medication programs at home rather than to use hospital out-patient services. At present, Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 50 registered hemophiliacs in Saskatchewan. Hemophiliacs are constantly exposed to the risk of hemorrhage because of a deficiency of normal clotting agents in their blood and the normal physical movements of every day life can cause a hemophiliac to bleed eternally. This bleeding is signalled by a pain in the joints. When this happens the individual must go to a hospital out-patient department to receive necessary treatment. Our new program will change all that.

Mr. Speaker, our dental plan for children has been an enormous success in Saskatchewan. Our government has made a commitment to expand the children's dental care program until all children and youth are covered from ages 3 to 18. You will recall that when this government introduced this program it was bitterly opposed by the opposition at that time and as long as it has existed both Liberal and Conservative spokesmen have been critical, calling our dental plan a frill. Mr. Speaker, a frill is something that one can do without. It is therefore without doubt that the intention of a Conservative government would be to abolish this very worthwhile program which has provided dental care and prevention services to tens of thousands of children who would never have seen a dentist until it was too late.

It was a sad day for children in Manitoba when the Conservative government there froze further development of a similar program begun by the former NDP government in that province. Conservatives in Manitoba now have introduced a new approach involving the Manitoba Dental Association. Members will recall that the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Nipawin (Mr. Collver), proposed this approach for Saskatchewan in the last session. What would that mean? Well the Manitoba Conservative plan has been announced to cost \$105 per child and it will probably be more, Mr. Speaker, the equivalent cost figure for the Saskatchewan Dental Plan is substantially lower than \$105. In the 1977-78 school year our dental plan's cost per child was \$74.36 and the estimated cost per child for 1978-79 shows a modest increase to \$75. In Manitoba only nine of the 29 rural school divisions are serviced by their program. In Saskatchewan children in every part of our province have accessibility — ours is a universal program. This year, the budget has provided funds to include the 13 year old age group as the first teenagers in the dental care plan. We recognize that dental service to teenagers is more complex than it is for the younger age groups of children, and under these circumstances it will be necessary to make some adjustments to the present dental program as we expand it to cover the older group of teenagers.

When we began the children's dental care plan, private dentists in Saskatchewan, speaking through their Saskatchewan Dental Association, were very resistant to our scheme and, in particular, to the use of dental nurses. The independent evaluation, which has been undertaken of the performance of dental nurses in Saskatchewan, is

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absolutely clear. The dental nurses perform their dental activities with outstanding competence, and no reasonable practitioner could refute the valuable and competent contribution made to dental services in Saskatchewan by dental nurses.

Now that we are about to begin a teenage dental program, I would like to think that the private dentists in Saskatchewan might wish to work with us more actively to provide dental services to the teenagers. I would also hope that the resistance from the dental profession which we have experienced since the early '70s might now be overcome, at least in part; and while I don't know yet whether the dental profession is interested in working with us to include dental services to teenagers, I'm willing to initiate some discussions with the dental profession on this matter. In the near future, I hope to be able to provide this Assembly with some information about our early thoughts on providing dental services to teenagers and to provide more information to the House about the kind of discussions I would like my department to have with the dental profession in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major initiatives this year will be the establishment of a Health Research Fund — \$750,000 has been included in the budget for this purpose — and the fund's primary objective will be to provide a continuing and a stable source of support for health research conducted in Saskatchewan by Saskatchewan researchers. Up to now, Saskatchewan, like many other provinces, has relied mainly on the federal funds to support our health research activities. Over the past few years, the federal government has not increased federal research funds at a rate which will even keep up with inflation. In fact, research funds have been subjected to outright cuts. It seems to us in Saskatchewan that a number of worthy research endeavors have been thwarted for lack of either seed money or operational money on the continuing basis.

Given also that Saskatchewan is increasingly an attractive environment in which to develop professional careers, it makes a good deal of sense to our government that we should support long-term investments in health service which might, in itself, offer the beginnings of a new scientific research industry in our province, and will also offer direct benefits for our health system.

To ensure that the fund meets the needs of the research community in Saskatchewan, the Department of Health has been actively soliciting as large a cross-section of views as possible with respect to determining the fund's terms of reference. I have been delighted by the many letters of support which have been received from the Saskatchewan scientific community in support of the Health Research Fund. Their suggestions for the fund's operating structure are essential in deciding on the fund's terms of reference. The terms of reference for the fund are nearly finalized and I shall be giving you much more detail on this matter when the legislation is introduced in the very near future. At that time I will outline our proposal for future funding which will lead to the establishment of a substantial fund for health research.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other very significant and important innovations outlined in the budget for this coming fiscal year. I will, in the next several days, take the opportunity to outline them to the members and to the public of Saskatchewan. They include such programs as the physician establishment grant and also some very significant and major changes in the financial assistance to medical and dental students, which will be welcomed by those students I know, because I have spoken to them about them.

Because of the radio time and my allotment having been utilized, Mr. Speaker, I just

want to conclude by saying that I am satisfied that this budget is responsible, prudent and adequate. It assures the children of today that their interests and needs and those of their children, in the future, are considered in government planning. On the behalf of the constituents of Humboldt I am delighted to be able to support it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W.A. ROBBINS (Minister of Revenue): — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at this time to be a participant in the budget debate. First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my congratulations to you in your re-election to the office of Speaker. I know you will perform your duties adequately and impartially for all members of this House. I would also like to offer my congratulations to the Deputy Speaker, the member for Weyburn (Mr. Pepper), one of the hardest working members you will find around this Assembly and also to all newly elected members of the House, whether they are on this side or the other side. My congratulations, too, Mr. Speaker, to my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Smishek) on the budgetary content and the presentation of it. I know, Mr. Speaker, from personal experience that the drawing up of the budget and the compilation of the remarks related to that budget is a time consuming and an onerous task. I have been through that experience.

The current budget is realistically compiled and was ably presented. Opposition critics have been critical of the budget. We, on this side of the House, expect that. The general public, I think, expect that. They also expect the presentation of constructive alternatives. The general public has a right to expect constructive alternatives, Mr. Speaker, but our expectations and the expectations of the general public are rarely, if ever, realized in this respect and one may ask why. Why, Mr. Speaker, do we search for positive suggested alternatives and rarely, if ever, find any? There must be an answer, Mr. Speaker, and there is one. It is due to a basic ingrained Conservative characteristic. Change to a Conservative is like a plague. He resists change with an all-consuming passion. A Conservative is a fellow who will fight to the death to prevent from passing out what his father fought to the death to prevent from coming in.

When the financial critic for the Progressive Conservative Party, the hon. member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher), entered the debate on Monday of this week, the tenor of the debate plummeted precipitously. Mr. Speaker, that is a perfectly normal result in any debate in which the hon. member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher) participates, past, present or future. The financial critic, Mr. Speaker, spoke at some length. I found it difficult to detect or discern facts in his rather tenuous exposition. He was willing to concede Mr. Speaker, that the federal authority in Canada has been following a policy of deficit financing for more than two decades. Yet he berates the Saskatchewan government for an anticipated fourth budgetary deficit for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1980, ignoring the fact that in the preceding period this province had 14 consecutive budgetary surpluses under CCF. Liberal and New Democratic governments. In fact, Mr. Speaker, since 1944 — I've got the lists here, I've done my research on it — we have had 31 budgetary surpluses and only five deficits to the end of the fiscal year ending this month, March 31, 1979. And, Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of those surpluses occurred under CCF and New Democratic administrations.

To make absolutely certain that we achieve budgetary surpluses in the future, the financial critic of the opposition wants to reduce the gasoline tax and eliminate the E & H tax. That's a total, Mr. Speaker, of a little over \$328 million. Economic logic, Mr. Speaker, does not bother the hon. member for Thunder Creek. It has never bothered him in the slightest degree.

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Governmental authorities should run surpluses in more prosperous times and utilize deficit financing in difficult times. Failure to do so accentuates the swings in the economic cycle and increases the economic difficulties.

I note, Mr. Speaker, a recent criticism of Saskatchewan government financial policy in the Meadow Lake Progress by the new member for Meadow Lake (Mr. McLeod). I enjoyed the hon. member for Meadow Lake's first presentation in the House; I think he is to be congratulated for it. But I think, Mr. Speaker, he needs some economic education. I noted in this article that he was very critical of Saskatchewan government financial policy. He said that he was critical of the Premier and of myself as revenue minister for indicating that the budgetary deficit for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1979, would in all probability exceed the anticipated deficit of approximately \$44 million. I quote him:

Blakeney and Robbins should get their facts straight. We do have a buoyant economy and we do have a massive budget deficit.

Mr. Speaker, under no circumstances could the budgetary deficits which have been incurred by this government in 1977, in 1978 and in 1979 be termed massive. They are in each case less than 3 per cent of annual budgetary expenditures. The federal deficit in the current year runs close to 22 per cent of their total budgetary expenditures and that will be in the range of \$50 billion.

I am aware that the hon. member for Meadow Lake is a school teacher — of history, I believe, or social studies. I'm not certain of that but I think it's true. He confirms it. Perhaps he could do with a little economic education.

The budgetary deficit which occurred in the fiscal year ending March 31, 1977 was totally due to the pay out of some \$35 million in grants to beef producers. That payment came after the budget had been introduced and was the cause of that deficit. Without that payment our year ending March 31, 1977 would've produced a surplus of approximately \$12 million.

I want to ask the hon. member for Meadow Lake a question. Had he been a member of this House at that time, would he have opposed that assistance to beef producers? If he was or is an opponent, I think it incumbent upon him to inform the beef producers in his constituency of that fact.

In 1976 we produced the largest crop in our history. That production of 880 million bushels of cereal grains and oil seeds was of excellent quality; yet net farm income that year, related to two years later, had dropped by 50 per cent from \$1,512 million to \$868 million. Would he not admit that that was cause for government concern? Would he not admit that agriculture is our most important industry? Would he not admit the deficit financing was an appropriate economic stance in the face of that agricultural economic down-turn?

Mr. Speaker, if he will not admit it, then he shouldn't be teaching history. I quote the hon. member again:

It is precisely at times when our economy is healthy that we should be building a budget surplus to carry us over the times when our economy slips.

I agree with that statement. That's exactly what we have done.

With Saskatchewan so dependent on farm receipts and farm receipts so dependent on things beyond our control such as world grain prices, we cannot afford the luxury of budget deficits in good years.

I would agree with that statement too. The only trouble with the member for Meadow Lake is that he fails to look at history. I cannot agree with him because I believe a 50 per cent reduction in net income to the major industry in this province demands some deficit financing. Evidently he does not.

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member for Meadow Lake is a history teacher, where has he been since 1975 in relation to current history and current events? Maybe he's been on permanent vacation the year round in that beautiful Meadow Lake Park that the Minister of Tourism and Renewable Resources built for him and the people of his constituency and Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan farm economy went into a slump after fiscal 1976 and that is precisely why we went to deficit financing at that time. In fact, because we did build budgetary surpluses in a time when the economy was healthy, particularly the agricultural economy, it provides the precise reason for deficit financing now. The policy has been more successful than we knew. In fact, the levelling out of the cycle by the policy we utilized has been so successful that the hon. member for Meadow Lake cannot even detect that a down-turn did occur.

Mr. Speaker, the Meadow Lake member should cast his view to the east. The leader of his party at the federal level, Mr. Joe Clark, is talking about a stimulative deficit at the federal level if he is elected Prime Minister to get the national economy rolling and, incidentally, I think the member for Meadow Lake should be aware that Saskatchewan is part of Canada. The difficulty is that we are caught at the national level in that no budgetary surpluses were accumulated in the prosperous '50s and '60s and early '70s. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a budgetary accumulated deficit of more than \$40 billion is our current legacy from previous Conservative and Liberal governments at the federal level.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — The hon. member for Meadow Lake needs to direct his advice to his cohorts at the federal level. We had a federal Conservative administration from 1957 to 1963 and consecutive deficits were incurred in fiscal 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, and 1963. Continuing deficits have occurred ever since under Liberal administrations with the one exception of the fiscal year ending March 31, 1970.

It is never too late to try to direct advice to the appropriate authorities, and Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Meadow Lake should not be adverse to proffering his economic advice to the Liberals in Ottawa, for after all Liberals and Conservatives are interchangeable anyway. It's like the trading deals that go on in the major baseball leagues at spring training camp. If you are a Conservative member of the House of Commons from a Quebec constituency you cross the floor to the Liberals. Conservatives are an endangered species in Quebec. If you are a federal Liberal in Ontario you cross to the Conservatives. Liberals do not rate very highly in Ontario in the current political context.

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SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Or, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Meadow Lake should direct his economic advice at his Conservative cohorts in Ontario, who cling rather tenuously to power in the industrial heartland of Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Meadow Lake does not like budgetary deficits. The Ontario budgetary deficit two years ago exceeded the total Saskatchewan budget of \$1.5 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Of course he may well contend it's a larger province, and he will be right, with a broader economic base, and he will be right. But has it built budgetary surpluses in prosperous times to be used in terms of deficit financing in difficult times? It has not done so.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Last year Ontario had a budgetary deficit of \$800 million, almost exactly the amount they borrowed from the Canada Pension Plan. Did they borrow the money to invest in self liquidating assets which would, on an amortized basis, pay the debt off? They did not. Future payments of principal and interest on that indebtedness must be borne by Ontario taxpayers on a direct basis. All I can say to the Meadow Lake member is that your political allies in Ontario are badly in need of your economic advice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — The hon. member for Regina South (Mr. Rousseau) believes implicitly, as do all Conservatives, in cutting back. Simply reduce governmental expenditures annually for a term of years and the private sector will automatically solve all the economic problems.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have evidence of that type of a solution. In 1977 a Progressive Conservative government was elected in Manitoba. If one really wants to find an administration which has embarked on a policy of becoming progressively more conservative, rather than conservatively more progressive, one need go no further than Manitoba. Their motto, Mr. Speaker, like all PCs is just turn it over to the private entrepreneur and everything will come out smelling roses. Well at least it will come out smelling!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, old-fashioned classical economic theory taught, rather simplistically, that supply always creates its own demand. Cut-throat competition was the standard remedy for a down turn in a declining economy. Their rules, Mr. Speaker, are simple — cut prices to the bone, cut wages to starvation levels, cut government expenditures and achieve a surplus every year, irrespective of current economic conditions, and somewhere at the bottom of the economic pit a willing buyer will most

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assuredly be found for every desperate seller. That is the opposition's solution, Mr. Speaker. It's Neanderthal economics. The great depression of the '30s should logically have removed all components of that economic approach but it hasn't, Mr. Speaker, they are still around. There are 17 of them in this Chamber — at least part of the time.

Mr. Speaker, one can easily recall the arguments just prior to the Manitoba election in 1977 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, I hope the member for Regina South (Mr. Rousseau) pays some attention to these comments. One can easily recall the arguments just prior to the Manitoba election in 1977. It was a simple motto — Get rid of the socialists! They stymie production. They prevent required investment in mining and manufacturing.

Let's look at some of the results of the Manitoba change. I ask the financial critic (I don't know where he is but he isn't here) if he has looked at the 1978 mining statistics figures for Canada. Alberta leads, naturally with the oil and gas situation, with \$9.75 billion of mineral production. It is followed by Ontario with \$4.8 billion and Quebec with \$3.9 billion. British Columbia is in fourth place with \$1,820 in mining revenue income. Saskatchewan occupies fifth place with \$1,475 billion, an increase of almost \$300 million from \$1,184 million in the previous year. What about Manitoba? It slipped last year from sixth to seventh and its mineral production declined by almost \$100 million — from \$563,700,000 down to \$464 million.

All you have to do, Mr. Speaker, says the opposition, is apply restraint and give the private sector free rein and all will be well. All will be well for whom? The few, the chosen few in the private sector. The progressively more Conservative solution is no solution at some \$2.1 billion to the end of 1978, and heaped scorn on the some \$419 million proposed borrowing for fiscal 1979. However, Mr. Speaker, he conveniently ignores the assets on the other side of the ledger. Wouldn't one think a business-like businessman would look at the asset side as well as the liability side. He has a rather unbusinesslike approach for a Conservative-type businessman. He ignores the fact that the assets, after regular rates of depreciation, of SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation), Sask Tel, Sask Potash and SaskOil — only 4 out of the 22 corporations (and naming only those four) — total \$2,134 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, the financial critic talked about budgetary deficits since 1975 for this government. He implied we had deficits in 1975 and 1976. We did not. He was wrong again. In the fiscal year ending March 31, 1975 we had a budgetary surplus of \$23,325,488. In the fiscal year ending March 31, 1976 we had a budgetary surplus of \$23,034,600. The financial critic expressed concern over inflation and inflationary trends in our economy. That, Mr. Speaker, is a very legitimate concern. Inflation is a severe problem. It is a problem in this province; it's a problem in this nation; it's a problem around the world. Applying outdated, outmoded theories expounded by the Adam Smiths of another bygone age will not solve the problems.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, we will pay a penalty for the profligate policies of our national governments over the past two or more decades. We will go through the wringer on that one. Prices rose last year by approximately 9 per cent across Canada. About 3 per cent of that increase was a direct result of the depreciation of the Canadian

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dollar. As Canadians, we cannot recover this loss of purchasing power by paying ourselves higher incomes now. That loss of purchasing power is a real income loss by us, as Canadians, to other countries in the international community. If we are logical, we will absorb it. If we are not and attempt to recapture that loss, we will incur further inflation and risk further depreciation of the Canadian dollar.

Mr. Speaker, any student of economics, even at the elementary level, will realize that we in Saskatchewan cannot protect ourselves against inflationary implications of huge budgetary deficits at the federal level.

We import, Mr. Speaker, into this province practically all our major capital items — trucks, tractors, combines, TV sets, household appliances. Inflationary pressures outside of our province flow in over our borders. The statistical story clearly illustrates this to be a fact.

Canada's inflationary rate in 1978 was 8.9 per cent. In our major cities of Saskatoon and Regina, the overall year to year increases were 6.3 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively.

Mr. Speaker, while it is true we incurred budgetary deficits in the fiscal year ending March, 1977 of about \$23 million and some \$40 million in the fiscal year ending March 31, 1978 and we will incur a deficit in the fiscal year which will end shortly, appreciably in excess of our estimate, we will not incur a genuine deficit until we are into the fiscal year, March 31, 1980 because we are using up previous surpluses.

Those budgetary deficits were simply using up those surpluses in preceding years. Yes, Mr. Speaker, these are good Keynesian economics, sound budgetary methods and excellent fiscal responsibility.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, I only want to say one or two brief words about two departments I have some responsibility for. The revenue department obviously collects taxes (and those are the direct taxes related to the governmental process). We expect to collect \$239 million in education tax in the next fiscal year; we expect to collect \$84.6 million in gasoline taxes; we expect \$24.5 million in tobacco taxes; \$7.6 million in insurance taxes and \$4.425 million in other taxes. Those are the direct taxes. The department also looks after supply and services, the CVA (Central Vehicle Agency) vehicles. I note the member for Regina South talks about inflation and we are buying automobiles from an automobile dealership that he has some interest in. He was the low bidder and therefore he should get . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, the manufacturer was the low bidder, sorry. The manufacturer was the low bidder, but we get 195 vehicles from the American Motors Corporation.

If we look at the co-operative department, which is a relatively small department, I'm quite willing to admit, I hope that people out there in Saskatchewan land look on the Department of Co-operation as the department in government which will act as the conduit for services to co-operatives. What we really need in our society is a sharing and a caring society, rather than a getting and a grasping society.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, may I return again for a brief commentary on the

financial critic. I know a number of members in this House know that I use verse once in awhile. Now, some of the new members may not be familiar with this. I don't suggest it's poetry necessarily. I simply say it's verse because the record of the opposition is going to get verse and verse. I ask you to take note of this and pass it on to the member for Thunder Creek.

The Thunder Creek member, emphatic and blind
Enters the budget debate, and begins to unwind.
Flushed in the face and shining with pride
He rants and regurgitates, he's fit to be tied.
His figures are strange, his tactics unkind,
He's clearly unhappy, and caught in a bind.
He is rabid, ridiculous, erratic and sad
The opposition is good, and the government is bad.
The tactics devised, devoid of bias or taint
Prove once and for all, that this fine rural saint
With a long hairy brush heavily dipped in coal tar
Can prove things quite different, than they really are.
According to him, the truth must be told
Industry is harassed and lo and behold.
Potash, oil, mining development will go
They will all melt away like new fallen snow.
The Socialists are nasty, their dogma holds sway
They've wrecked all our dreams forever — away.
In conclusion now muted, thank goodness for that
Haggard, confused, bewildered and flat.
The results are now with us, inevitable, clear,
Political demise of the member gradually draws near.
The reasons are evident, not hard to seek,
His voters will drown him in yon Thunder Creek.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, because opposition criticisms do not in the main, square with the facts and because the Saskatchewan electorate is an alert one, this government was returned to power in 1978 with an increased majority.

I've been around the legislature for some years now, Mr. Speaker, and I've enjoyed a modest measure of electoral success. I was re-elected by the voters in Saskatoon Nutana — despite divine intervention — in the October election with my largest majority in five elections.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROBBINS: — I received 4,991 votes to 2,575 for my nearest opponent and 1,118 for the third candidate. I had a plurality of 2,416 over the nearest opponent and 1,298 combined majority over the two opposing candidates. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank the Saskatoon Nutana voters for their loyalty and hard work in ensuring the election of a New Democratic government. The voters of Saskatoon Nutana and, yes, Mr. Speaker, of Saskatchewan decided they had preference for ability in economic matters over agility in economic transactions. I commend them for their qualities of discernment.

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Mr. Speaker, it should be obvious I will support the budget motion.

HON. E. KRAMER (Minister of Highways & Transportation): — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure and a privilege to rise in this legislature and support the budget that was brought down by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance. It is especially a pleasure after having been here consecutively since 1952, my 27th year in this legislature, to be here and see the progress, the buoyancy and all those good things descending on Saskatchewan that did in this budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have been on the air during the legislature for about two years and I would like to thank those people who are listening in The Battlefords and certainly in other places as well for their confidence in returning me for the 27th year and I think it's the eighth term to this legislature.

The Battlefords have grown over the years — I mean the town of Battleford — into the fastest growing, most progressive community that you will find anywhere in western Canada. I think that all I can say is that it is nice to have the confidence of the people at home. It is nice to be able to go home, go down the streets of North Battleford and down the country roads and be able to hold your head up and know that those people, even those who don't vote for you, are your friends.

In Saskatchewan when I was first elected, Mr. Speaker, I ran, in 1952, as a freshman. I would like all of you people, you younger members and those across the floor, Mr. Speaker, to take note of this. I ran in 1952 for The Battlefords constituency after eight years of CCF government under Tommy Douglas. When I undertook to run as a candidate I was able to look at the two program cards — 1944, 1948 and enumerate all those things that had been promised and all those things that had been done — promises made, promises kept.

I could stand up, in the 1952 election, and say to my constituents — this is your guarantee that the program for prosperity, which was our 1952 program, will be realized and the promises will be kept. I could say it with assurance, because that is the way our party has always operated when it was the CCF and now that it is the New Democratic Party.

I say that I can stand up in The Battlefords and have done in a number of elections, and on my program card I have said that I have never made a promise I didn't keep. No one has yet challenged that and I am proud of that record.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — I intend, Mr. Speaker, to keep on. It is 27 years and so for the next 27 years I hope I can do as well.

I want to draw your attention to this program card, the program card of the 1978, October 18 election. My colleague from Redberry (Mr. Banda), drew attention to this yesterday. He pointed out, in spite of all the doomsday predictions and all the crying from across the way, that this budget that we are discussing here today, in this first budget we have already kept 16 of the 27 commitments that are on this card.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Speaker, that is a record of performance that has not been equalled anywhere, by any province, by any government, in the Dominion of Canada. We, as New Democrats, can be proud to stand up with our heads held high, when we hold up our program cards.

Programs, you know, political platforms as they used to call them — it was once said were something that politicians stood on at election time and like railroad platforms, they tried to get away from as quick as they possibly could. We have made the difference. We have made the difference and I am proud to have been part of making that difference.

Well, we heard, and I can't wax poetic as my colleague the Minister of Revenue (Mr. Robbins) did. We heard from the member for Thunder Creek (Mr. Thatcher) his criticism of this budget, or his attempted criticism, his attempted critique, and you know, Mr. Speaker, I am going to say a bit more about the performance by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Collver) and some of the people opposite in this debate. But I want to say this: that it proves what a sorry situation that party is in and, contrary to some extent to what my colleague Mr. Robbins has said, contrary to that, it is a sorry day for a party, any party, any opposition, when they have to depend on the member for Thunder Creek to raise the tenor of debate. As a matter of fact, he did. But it's like the Englishman said when he was asked: 'how's your missus?' And the other one answered: 'Compared to what?'

Mr. Speaker, the member for Thunder Creek attempted to denigrate the budget. He gave us some long-winded economic theories that we had heard in the dim distant past by others in this House. We have said in the New Democratic Party, and it was repeated by my colleague who just sat down, that there isn't really any difference between the Liberal and the Conservative Parties. They can change seats like you change your shoes — or your shorts. They change — we have the changeable ones over there. I understand since the last Liberal convention they're crawling on their knees — these two turncoats are crawling on their knees back to Ted Malone asking if they can come back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — Never have I seen a party so quickly snatch victory from the jaws of defeat or defeat from the jaws of victory, either way you put it. You know, Mr. Speaker, we've watched these people across the way, and especially the . . . I'm not talking about the new ones, I hope they will learn . . . but we've watched the performance of the former Liberal, now supposedly Tory, for Thunder Creek, and we've watched the member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lane) vying for whatever they see in their own future. And I'm reminded, Mr. Speaker, and I almost laughed, when I hear these people putting forward their theories that they are supposed to be part of another party and yet they sound exactly the same as when they sat as members of the Liberal Opposition — exactly the same, there is no difference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — You know, even over there, it seems to me there was a time when some of the members opposite had a sense of humor. They even lack that in this opposition. I remember the former leader of the opposition, now Senator Steuart, gone to his reward. Someone once said, you know, they have so many vacancies in the Senate and

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so many senators, the difference between a senator and a vacancy is \$30,000 a year.

AN HON. MEMBER: — It is \$40,000.

MR. KRAMER: — It has gone up to \$40,000 has it? Mr. Steuart was heard to remark (in fact I think it was even on the air in an interview) after the present hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lane) left the Liberal Party, that is the first furry critter I ever saw swim toward a sinking ship. I am quoting Senator Steuart.

You know, I am sorry that the member is not in his seat. I would like to know how he feels on this. It hasn't quite sunk. I suppose you could say, it was swamped — it was swamped by the inept performance of the captain and the crew. It was swamped, stuck on the shoals and going down, so this furry critter swam from one sinking ship to a swamped one. That is quite a record.

We have seen some changes, some very welcome ones in the legislature. I see some bright new faces and I am very happy to see a number of the experienced former war horses here. I want to congratulate of course, the Minister of Finance for his speech. I want to congratulate all of those people who returned to strengthen the government in its continued efforts in our new decade of progress. I want to suggest that we have a real spokesman in one of the new members — a spokesman for environment — the hon. member for Sutherland (Mr. Prebble) who replaced (and it is almost ironic, isn't it, that someone who is so interested in the environment, cleaned up that Lane?) I congratulate Mr. Prebble. This was the other Lane, the back Lane or whatever Lane who came into the House with unsubstantiated evidence about filthy hospitals in this province — the same person who waxed loud and long about torture camps which turned out to be an outright lie. Thank you for the job of cleaning up the environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Speaker, really, after 27 years of watching tremendous, cutting debates over the years by many masters on both sides of the House, I look at this House and I watch this House today and it's sort of no challenge, no challenge. It's a nothing opposition, completely nothing opposition. You know I feel like a matador who steps out to the ring ready to show his prowess, with his sword ready to go and he's faced by a bull that has foot and mouth disease and bloat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — No challenge! I feel like the cowboy who gets into the chute on top of old Smokey because it's important you have a horse that will really do its stuff so that you can prove your prowess — gets out of the chute and falls on its face. Mr. Speaker, that is a sorry situation that . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — . . . has fallen upon this House. Mr. Speaker, you know when you watch the performance . . . I invite the member for Moosomin (Mr. Birkbeck) to read Hansard. Read, if he can. I would invite him to do that. I have never seen a performance like that and I'm sure that it disgusted even the members on his side of the House. About the only thing one could say about the member for Moosomin is that he sure passed a lot of good places to stop.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — Someone was heard to remark he never had a thought his mouth couldn't use, and I think that that sums the situation up very aptly.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have said that I was proud of promises kept. I was proud of our performance, that we have been able to move along and that's why, Mr. Speaker, simply that. When I spoke in northwest Saskatchewan I said hear, hear the record. Go back as far as you wish and you will find a record of promises kept and this is your guarantee for the future. And that is why we have 44 members on this side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — When you are fortunate enough to have a leader of the calibre of our Premier, and when you are fortunate enough to have other young colleagues, who could take his place and do almost equally well, then, Mr. Speaker, you have a strong team. I could pick, as dean of this House, at least a dozen young men and older men from this side of the House who would do a job of leading, and a proud job of leading this province. And that is a mark of quality. Mr. Speaker, that I'm proud of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. I, while I am proud to be here, while I am proud of our record, am also sad because of the low ebb to which this House has fallen. I am sad because a leader, a so-called leader, of a party will come into this House, when he should have been bringing forth new ideas as a new opposition, and desecrate this House with filthy innuendo and unfounded statements. I can say, Mr. Speaker, these are only cowardly. I am saying to him, I'll repeat the Premier's challenge, step outside this House, name a name if he dares and he'll need more than his Swiss bank account to pay the damages. He'll need more!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — But that is not the worst of it, Mr. Speaker. The worst of it is that when that person (I will not use the term hon. member) got up and spoke on that occasion and other occasions when he was equally wrong and desecrating this House, almost all of the 16 members sitting behind him applauded. I say that is the disgrace of this House, that's the disgrace.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — As dean of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, there have been times in this House when I have spoken out of turn. But as dean of this legislature I am saddened. I am ashamed that we should have fallen to this new low. I am ashamed, not of anything we have done but just because these people have chosen that, because what they do, whatever happens here, rubs off on all of us and the confidence of young people in this country is destroyed. Parliament is denigrated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — I say to you people across the way, especially you younger ones, that you had best take note, you had best take stock and do something about it. If you really believe that you want to be parliamentarians, stand up and be counted and clean up

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your act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: — It's not too late!

MR. KRAMER: — No, it's not too late.

AN HON. MEMBER: — The ship has sunk!

MR. KRAMER: — Well, as I said, the ship is swamped, Mr. Speaker, it hasn't quite gone down. They may yet be able to retrieve something.

The Department of Highways and Transportation, Mr. Speaker, has been my department and I will give a very short report because I do not intend, Mr. Speaker, to encroach on the time of this House as others have done. I have a longer speech to make as a report from my department. I am only going to give the highlights and I am going to table the text. I will try to give you a few highlights and I will table the text and the program array for this year along with the annual report of the Department of Highways when I'm through.

Our department has continued to offer and provide efficient, safe transportation at minimum cost to our taxpayers. In spite of inflation we have in Saskatchewan, in many cases, exceeded transportation services in other parts of this country. As proof of what I'm saying, let's look at the record.

The department is responsible in Saskatchewan for more miles of highway than any other province of Canada with the exception of Ontario which has an equal amount. In Saskatchewan, taxpayers have paid for more miles of four-lane divided highway than in any other jurisdiction in western Canada: 310 miles each for Manitoba and B.C., 345 miles for Alberta and 385 miles for Saskatchewan. I say that is a record we can be proud of. This year, this budget will provide for a new bridge north of Gronlid. We will begin preparation for another major bridge on the meridian north of Lloydminster on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. A major bridge and causeway is now underway — I was up there last week and it was under construction — at Buffalo Narrows.

New provincial airports which are under our jurisdiction have been completed in the last couple of years at Meadow Lake and Hudson Bay. Another new airport is under construction now and will be completed this year at Buffalo Narrows.

Mr. Speaker, 100 miles of new all-weather road has been completed in the last six months, north of La Loche. We're opening up the North to Cluff Lake and on to Uranium City not only for mineral development but for tourism, recreation, fisheries and everything along the road.

Prior to this, Uranium City has always had to depend on traffic through waterways from Edmonton. We are allowing and offering an opportunity for competition to our Saskatchewan suppliers for the markets in that north country, especially at Uranium City.

Major upgrading work is going on now and will continue between Creighton and Smeaton, just east of Prince Albert.

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Major financial contributions have been made to urban centres to upgrade public streets and the transit systems. We hear from across the way, what are you doing for the municipalities and the urban centres? We said truthfully in our election program that 45 per cent of the total budget goes to benefit, and is largely spent by elected local governments, both urban and rural. Those are the facts.

In Regina alone, my friend Henry Baker to the right of me, the member for Regina Wascana and Mayor, of the city and his alderman working and sharing on many arterial roads but the Ring Road is being paid for completely by the provincial government; \$5 million in the northeast quadrant alone, from Victoria over to Pasqua; \$5 million, redounding largely to the benefit, almost entirely to the benefit of the citizens of Regina.

The transit systems — well there have been 125 new buses purchased by the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Moose Jaw in the last two or three years. The taxpayers of Saskatchewan have paid for half of those; 50 per cent of every new city bus you ride on is paid for out of the pockets of the Saskatchewan taxpayers to assist in keeping the congestion off our city streets and in encouraging people to ride. Further to that, we pay 75 per cent of the cost of shelters and also a subsidy per passenger on all those buses and they say, what are you doing for the cities, what are you doing for urban governments?

New techniques are constantly being developed to overcome the rapid escalation of highway costs. Completely unique again in Saskatchewan, a new test track was built — the brainchild of the civil servants in that department. Engineers who had imagination and foresight built a test track inside, an igloo type building that is the first on the North American continent and, I believe, the first in the world. We are getting information now, quicker and faster, on pavements and pavement strength. This is being taken advantage of by governments, other departments of highways private industry both in Canada and the United States. A real salute, I think, should go to those civil servants who had the foresight to do this and bring this progress about at very little cost to the taxpayers. We'll have our money back next year and go on from there.

Pavement recycling has been introduced. Rather than throw away — with energy and fuel, asphalt as expensive as it is — we are recycling old pavement, running it through and using it a second time. This is being done extensively in the United States. We are successful and will continue to be successful in providing this kind of service and reduce our costs.

New maintenance practices are continually being tested in other ways to improve our highways. The department is concentrating on the needs of the people travelling in Saskatchewan. This includes:

1. Completion of the four-lane highway between Regina and Saskatoon on No. 11. Chamberlain is the only two-way bottleneck and that's going to be very difficult to get around. But folks should slow down once in a while and maybe that won't be all bad.
2. Rebuilding of further sections of No. 4 between North Battleford and Meadow Lake and between Rosetown and Biggar.
3. The upgrading of Highway No. 2 between No. 11 and Prince Albert.
4. Complete rebuilding of No. 40 between Shellbrook and North Battleford, which

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completes the modern highway between Prince Albert and North Battleford, at least one of the most important places in Saskatchewan.

I think it's going to improve though, the P.A. will improve. We've had some changes there and I want to congratulate my colleague, Mr. Hammersmith (Prince Albert-Duck Lake). There used to be a song around, the Whiffenpoof song, whiff went poof anyway.

Mr. Speaker, continued rebuilding of Highway No. 155 between Green Lake and Buffalo Narrows is going on apace. There are many others.

My department will in 1979-80 maintain a level of construction activity comparable in dollar value to that achieved last year. The principle thrust of the 1979-80 program will be to continue the emphasis on upgrading secondary highways in the southern area of the province; to complete the upgrading of Highway No. 155 which includes a major causeway, as I have said before, and bridge — Buffalo Narrows; to maintain progress in the northeast on 106: to continue the construction of a new bridge on Highway No. 6 north of Gronlid and to begin the new meridian bridge north of Lloydminster.

Mr. Speaker, the program array will be tabled. We will continue paving and Widening on Yellowhead Highway, which is now carrying more traffic than Trans-Canada and it only has one lane all the way. We will continue (and I say this in spite of the efforts of those people opposite who will put politics ahead of people and especially people's lives) our efforts on safety. I may say this, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time we have had 60 less deaths on our highways in Saskatchewan since seat belts were introduced the first year, 60 less deaths by any statistics, while the deaths in Alberta have increased by 11 per cent. Given our population and our driving, this would at least mean that if the Alberta government had any courage whatever, any political courage whatever, any consideration for the safety of people, 120 people who died in Alberta last year would now be alive — to say nothing, Mr. Speaker, of those who were far less seriously injured and probably are paraplegics, which are not included in the fatalities in these statistics. I say take a look at your policy over there. I congratulate the new member for Indian Head-Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) on his stand. You had better talk to your colleagues and they better have the courage of their convictions and stop playing politics, Mr. Speaker, with people's lives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — Our future in Saskatchewan is assuredly most promising. It is not going to happen over night, Mr. Speaker, but with the new mineral development, heavy oil development and all those things that are going to add to our great agricultural heritage, this province is on its way. The new decade of progress, that we predict, is only the beginning. I say to my colleagues here, the people across the way, the people of Saskatchewan, there are many things that we can be proud of if we all get behind the wheel and pull our weight rather than drag our feet.

Mr. Speaker, looking at the time, I can only skip very lightly over this. It might be of interest to know that last year, Mr. Speaker, we had a serious cutback, going back on agreements, by the federal government. The anticipated sharing revenue from the federal government was cut back by \$60 million. My department alone will suffer a loss of \$5 million because of the backing away from their promise on highway strengthening. At the same time new revenue provided by Saskatchewan people of \$1 billion went to Ottawa in the last six years, just in mineral and oil resources alone and taxes on corporations that are in the mineral field.

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I protest and resent cutting back in federal expenditures when we have every right to expect more. They will create more problems, Mr. Speaker, than they think they are going to cure, simply because they are not taking a look at the greatest resource, our people, putting them to work in meaningful jobs and giving them a future at something other than the bread line and unemployment.

My department's total budget this year will be roughly \$160 million. One hundred million of that will be capital programs; \$47 million of that will be maintenance. It's again worth noting that 50 per cent of our maintenance budget alone will go directly to gravel crushing contractors, suppliers of asphalt and other suppliers.

Last year, \$50 million of our budget went to the contractors of Saskatchewan in payment for grading and asphalt work. I think that that is a pretty credible effort. I want to say this at this time. While we have a department and staff that I am proud of, I am also very proud of the contractors and the contracting capability that we have in this province. Once again, I think we get more for fewer dollars, in Saskatchewan than in most jurisdictions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — While doing all this, the department's permanent staff has decreased in recent years, decreased. By creating greater efficiencies in our daily operations there has, even at that, been a constant increase in the quality of service provided to the people of Saskatchewan. Our labor service staff provides an important contribution to the economic well-being of Saskatchewan. There are 125 maintenance depots scattered around this province in small communities, anywhere from five to seven people working there, and each one of those communities benefiting from the payroll that's in that area. So the economic well-being of Saskatchewan, especially smaller communities, is also helped by the fact that this is a decentralized department.

We have, Mr. Speaker, over the last seven or eight years, made a decision back in '71 that we would provide winter roads to Uranium City. We have done that. More and more tonnage is constantly going over that road, and more and more tonnage will go over it as it's improved. Next year anyone in Saskatchewan will be able to drive winter or summer as far as Cluff Lake which is about 120 miles south of Uranium city. Now it's going to be a long while before they drive to Uranium City, but when you think that Uranium City is further away from my home constituency of North Battleford than the city of Winnipeg you get some idea of the distance that challenges us in this attempt to provide road communication to the North. The first year we opened up the ice road, the winter road, six million pounds were shipped over that road. Last year 16 million — this year we anticipate between 30 million and 35 million will go over that winter road to Cluff Lake, Uranium City and a few other points. That is a tremendous amount of commerce, Mr. Speaker. Because we have had the foresight and the vision, and our crews have had the courage to go out there in winter and challenge that fierce north land winter, that fierce climate and challenge 50 miles of ice across Lake Athabasca and Carswell Lake.

I think we ought to strike a medal for people like these; unfortunately we lost one young man, a grader went down in the centre of Lake Athabasca. I give you one instance of heroism or courage or bravery; call it what you wish. The grader went down in 30 feet of water, not too far off shore Lake Athabasca about 2 months ago, and stayed down. The operator didn't have time to get out. He went down to the bottom, allowed the cab to fill

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up so that he could open the door — out, up. Unfortunately the first try he didn't find the hole. He backed off, came up, and got out. The next day he was back on the motor grader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — I say, Mr. Speaker, that's what makes me angry when people (and some people in this legislature are guilty of it) deprecate the efforts of those people who go out winter and summer and risk their lives to provide service to the people of Saskatchewan. I congratulate our people, regardless of where they are, that face those blizzards.

We had (and I like to see that) an editorial in the Swift Current Sun, when they had the big blizzard there, entitled 'Highway Heroes'. Many lives were saved because our people were out there challenging the weather, getting people out of cars, getting people home. They, and the RCMP, deserve a tremendous amount of credit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — Well I would like, Mr. Speaker, to talk a little more about safety. I would like to talk a little more about the direction that our department intends to go and the services we intend to provide. Time will not permit me to do that.

The innovation of a winter weight policy allows smaller communities off the primary system to get the larger loads in and cut down the costs. Our rural bus services which involve communities and allow people, regardless of where they are, access to the highway system that they helped to pay for; we are proud of that. I am sure you will all agree that this \$160 million budget will continue to provide a significant impact on our provincial economy, because highways are the life-line of our future.

Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in presenting this Legislative Assembly a copy of our 1979-80 program. I will table that. I will table our annual report. I will also table another item that I am going to speak on before I close.

I have heard a great deal being said last year and this year about our 19-cent gasoline tax and how much better off people are in Alberta . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Isn't that great! Well, they are better off in some places. If they are close to the Saskatchewan border they may be better off. If they happen to live in the large centres, they are better off, as we are, because the gas is cheaper here. But if you go off the main roads, not off the main highways, but just a little way out of Edmonton in any direction, you will find the price of gasoline is very little lower than it is in Saskatchewan because the oil companies are ripping people off wherever they can. Mr. Speaker, at Wainwright, not too far across the border, a young man who came back from Edmonton the other day said he thought he would fill up to save some money. He was going to be a freeloader. He admitted that. He stopped at Wainwright at a gas station on the highway and found that he was going to have to pay only three cents less than if he went home. He went home. Here, I am going to table this. Some of you know where Okotoks, Alberta is. It's hardly out of the way, hardly into the hinterland. Right on a main highway at a Gulf station . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . So, so? Let's take a look. What should the price of gasoline be at Okotoks? At least it's in that haven of tax holiday in Alberta. Yes, the supposed one! Pat Smith, North Battleford, handed me this when I was home last week visiting my constituents. He put in 14 gallons of regular gas and paid \$14. I am going to table that, Mr. Speaker, along with other documents. That's the rip-off. Fat lot of good a

gas tax reduction does for the people around Okotoks and other places like Wainwright. I mention two and there are many others. Let's not have too much of this nonsense.

Mr. Speaker, I want to table this. I want to table our program, New Decade of Progress, with 16 points out of 27 already accomplished in this budget. I want to table our program array. I want to table my own report as minister. And these sheets — a speech I might have given if our time had not been encroached upon so drastically. There is so much time wasted by the person who passes too many places to stop. And our annual report from the department. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support this budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. R. KATZMAN (Rosthern): — Mr. Speaker, first let me congratulate you on being elected as Speaker for another term. Secondly, I would like at this time to thank my constituents for returning me to this House with a bigger percentage of the vote than I got last time. I'll probably get a bigger one next time and a bigger one the time after.

Well, Mr. Speaker, due to popular demand from the NDP benches. I have decided to join in the debate on this budget. This is the fourth consecutive deficit budget brought in by the NDP. The day before delivering the budget speech to the people of Saskatchewan. Walter Smishek, surprisingly still the Minister of Finance, was so excited about his fourth consecutive budget that some of the details were leaked to the Leader Post. An early announcement of an increase in cigarette taxes caused a run on cigarettes which I discovered after checking with wholesale distributors in Saskatoon. I also did some further checking, and found that several of the places that required cigarettes were selling them on the following weekend at the new increased price, even though they purchased them at the old price. So, Mr. Speaker, I would say that because of the budget leak and because of my checking that I've done, there was profiteering by the minister's slip-up.

First of all, let me start on the Department of Agriculture (Mr. Kaeding). It is interesting to note that every time the government gets involved in the market place — for an example, the 46,000 loan for cows — we end up with serious problems down the road. Warren Allmand recently announced that he wants all marketing boards to increase their quotas thereby causing a surplus. This surplus will cause a fall in the prices to the producers and cheaper products to the consumers. Check your Leader Post if you'd like to Mr. Whelan, you'll discover the comment. Mr. Whelan, if that's the intent of marketing boards then once again it is another example that marketing boards are not worth their salt.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Not for the producer anyway.

MR. KATZMAN: — That's right, not for the producer. They do not only control the supply, but they control the supply to the producer — a surplus causing to farmers a loss of money. In other words, it they open up the supply totally as Mr. Allmand is suggesting, it's the producer that's going to lose again.

Let's take a close look at one of the phases of the industry. Let's look at the livestock or the beef portion of the industry. In 1950 people were consuming approximately 51 pounds of beef for approximately 2.5 per cent of their disposable income. In 1978 people were playing less than 2.5 per cent of their disposable income. Being a livestock producer I say to myself: what are the so-called experts talking about when they are

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saying prices are high, beef prices are too high? Let's take a look at the figures. I have been told that for the last 30 years people spend an average of 2.5 per cent of their disposable income on beef. Today in the city of Toronto, people are only spending 2.146 of their disposable income on beef, while across Canada the average is only 2.11 per cent of their disposable income. These figures are the 1978 figures — the last figures available. However, people are getting 102 pounds for 2.11 per cent of their disposable income in 1978 rather than in 1950 they were getting 51 pounds of beef for 2.5 per cent of their disposable income. This means people are receiving twice as much for less than what they were paying in 1950. This indicates that beef is still a bargain. I'm sure there are many figures that would indicate the same conclusion in many other provinces, if time allowed me to bring them in. My point is that it's time we started sticking up for the producer.

Mr. Speaker, let me refer to some remarks made by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kaeding) the other day. The Minister of Agriculture talked about incentives taken under the marketing board since 1971 — see page 13 of his text that he gave to the press — and what they've accomplished since they established the hog commission, the sheep and wool, and the vegetable marketing commission.

It is interesting to note that before the hog marketing commission was established, there were three plants killing hogs in Saskatchewan. Today, we only have one. In fact, things have got so bad that today Intercontinental Packers and this government, the NDP government, have had to buy a feed lot for their hogs, just so they can have animals available for Monday. That's a statement made by Intercon to the press. Check with the Saskatoon Star Phoenix. If this proves the efficiency the government was looking for under the marketing system, it has totally gone sour. They said under the marketing system we would have the right amount of animals all the time. That has proven totally wrong, because now the government has had to go out and buy a feed lot so they can have animals on Mondays.

The track record of marketing boards in Saskatchewan is terrible. It has brought Saskatchewan lower and lower in the market place of supply, and it would continue to do this in other areas if we get into it — especially when Warren Allmand makes his comment, let's increase supply so prices will come down. He wants to ride on the backs of producers again.

Mr. Speaker, let me say during the estimates I will have a rather lengthy line of questions and many points that I will be bringing up. May I suggest to the hon. ministers on the other side, if you thought I was lengthy last year, I have more questions this year.

Mr. Speaker, my time is limited today. Therefore, I wish to thank the members for allowing me to speak, and I will not be supporting this motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. H.H. ROLFES (Minister of Social Services): — Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the hon. member for Souris-Cannington (Mr. Berntson) . . . for his sake, yes, I am done, because he probably won't be able to understand what I have to say anyway.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to enter this debate, along with my colleagues on this side of the House. From the outset I, too, want to join them in congratulating you for having been re-nominated and for resisting so valiantly the position of Speaker. I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Smishek) for

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bringing in what is certainly known as a very prudent budget. It's a budget that, Mr. Speaker, has not only received fair compliments from the press in this province, but also from responsible people in local governments, particularly from my fair city of Saskatoon. The mayor of Regina has already spoken in this debate and has indicated his support for this budget also.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to do three things. First of all I want to spend some time on my fair city of Saskatoon and then I would like to spend a few minutes on the Department of Continuing Education and conclude with some remarks on the Department of Social Services.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Buena Vista for giving me their confidence and support in this last election. I think it should be noted that in 1971 when I first ran in the present seat of Buena Vista (at that time known as Nutana South), the expression in our party was, 'Win Nutana South and we'll sweep the province.' Well, I won Nutana South and we swept the province.

I remember that at that time the then leader of the opposition (Dave Steuart) said, 'Well, you were lucky, we'll get you next time'. Well, in 1975 it was true that my plurality went down from about 421 to 221. I can remember a conversation I had with the present Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Collver) downstairs in the cafeteria the day after they had their nomination in Buena Vista. I said, 'Dick, how did the nomination go?' Well, Herman,' he said, 'this time around we're going to whip your 'beep-beep'.'

In this House, Mr. Speaker, I can't repeat the exact words of the Leader of the Opposition but I'm pleased to say that he didn't beat my 'beep-beep' and I had an increased plurality of not 221 but 1,443 this time around.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, not only did we not win Buena Vista, but we won every poll in that constituency, every poll, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all those people. I think there were about 250 or 300 workers who came out to work on my behalf in Buena Vista.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank those people who sent congratulatory notes on the election night and, more so, those who, since that time, have phoned and written to me and have indicated that they wished me success in the problem that has arisen since the election — people who supported the Conservatives, people who supported the Liberals and people who supported the NDPs. I don't want to dwell on that particular problem because there will be ample opportunity to do so in the future and I now want to turn to the city of Saskatoon itself.

Mr. Speaker, the city of Saskatoon has fared well since 1971. Since the NDP took office in 1971 the city of Saskatoon has come to be known as the fastest growing city in the country of Canada. The city's prospects for urban expansion and long-term economic development are based upon the increased mineral explorations in northern Saskatchewan. Saskatoon, I think, has been very fortunate in that it was able to secure some of the major branch offices of all companies and mining corporations in Saskatchewan.

Given Saskatoon's proximity to northern communities, observers predict, Mr. Speaker,

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that Saskatoon will become a key distribution centre in western Canada, a jumping off point for northern development. Consequently, long-term development prospects look very good. Mr. Speaker, last year Saskatoon received \$7.3 million through municipal grants under revenue sharing. The 1979-80 budget has awarded our city a per capita grant of \$5.3 million and a foundation grant of \$4.5 million. The combined total of \$9.8 million indicates a 34 per cent increase over the 1978-79 figure. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to note that one of the city alderman said the other day they had expected a 25 per cent increase and since they have received a 34 per cent increase there would be a good possibility they could hold the mill rate and there may even be a possibility of reducing the mill rate this year — thanks to the Minister of Finance, thanks to the Blakeney government.

During the past fiscal year, Saskatoon received in excess of \$145 million for the support of local services. Included in this was funding for the Western Development Museum, the Saskatoon Centennial Auditorium, sporting and park facilities, libraries, cultural organizations, transportation and educational facilities. We look forward, in Saskatoon, to the continued support of this government throughout the 1979-80 fiscal year and years to come.

Under the provisions of this budget, recreational and cultural facilities will continue to receive strong financial support. A grant of \$493,000 has been allotted to the Western Development Museum and, Mr. Speaker, in this regard, I want to state that the government, I think, must come to grips with a firm policy on our museums in Saskatchewan and I hope to take an active part in developing that policy.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon will also receive \$2 million to construct a field house complex to facilitate the 1979 Western Canada Summer Games. Let me, as a member for Saskatoon, invite everybody to put aside a large portion of August of 1979 to come and visit Saskatoon and support all those people who will be participating in the events next summer. Not only can you enjoy the sports, but you can also enjoy the finest city in Saskatchewan.

In the past, Saskatoon has received a number of grants for the building of better facilities. Through the Department of Continuing Education, the Saskatchewan Universities Commission will receive an estimated \$1 million grant to be used for the veterinary college expansion. The commission will receive an additional \$5.5 million for the construction of the University of Saskatchewan engineering building — a total of \$6.5 million.

As in the past, senior citizens will benefit from a number of provincial grants. Residents in Saskatoon nursing homes will receive \$6.6 million in allowances to special care homes. The Department of Social Services, Community Services Division will provide \$561,988 for projects such as senior care centres, activity centres, meal services, home repair grants, to name only a few.

Mr. Speaker, members of this Assembly are familiar with the beautiful Wascana Centre. This project was initiated through the combined efforts of the province, the then CCF government and, I believe the legislation was introduced by our present Premier, Allan Blakeney. That project was a co-operative effort, as I said, between the province, the city of Regina and the University of Regina.

In 1978, the Saskatoon River Edge Park Authority was established and became known as the Meewasin Valley Authority. This authority was organized as a corporate body

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consisting of members appointed by the provincial government, the city of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan and the rural municipality of Corman Park. In 1978, the province awarded the authority \$200,000. This year's budget has allocated an estimated \$237,000 to the Meewasin Valley Authority. The people of Saskatoon are delighted with the prospect of having a recreation area within the Corman Park boundaries along the beautiful South Saskatchewan River. I feel confident that the Meewasin development will even surpass the successful endeavors of Wascana Park and make Saskatoon not only the fastest growing city in Canada but also one of the most beautiful in this nation.

Mr. Speaker, it would take too long to disclose all the financial assistance to be awarded to my fair city of Saskatoon. On behalf of the citizens of Saskatoon, I would like to convey our appreciation to the Blakeney government and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Smishek) for the numerous grants allotted to our city. I am proud to be a member of the NDP government which has assisted so much with the growth of Saskatoon through generous unconditional and conditional provincial grants.

Mr. Speaker, I have been Minister of the Department of Continuing Education for only a few months but those few months have been long enough to fully impress upon me the remarkable achievements that have been made in recent years in the field of continuing education in this province.

During the early part of this decade, the years 1970-71 in particular, there existed in the provincial educational system undeniable biases, a certain age and budgetary bias as well as a geographic bias. The resources of the Department of Education were concentrated on the very young in the elementary and secondary school system, with some resources devoted to post secondary education for the 18 to 24 age group. What the government of that day refused to recognize was that times were changing; a high school diploma or technical institute certificate or an undergraduate degree no longer paved the way for a life-time career. The government of the day, like certain other extinct species, was unable to adjust to changing conditions and so by the end of the 1970-71 school year it wasn't just the times that were changing but the government had changed too.

When the NDP assumed office in 1971 we continued to place high priority on the education of the very young. At the same time, however, we recognized that opportunities for learning are needed for all people of all ages. We recognized also that under the Liberal government post secondary education had been confined primarily to the major urban centres. The challenge facing the government was to improve accessibility, to bring together the education facilities with the people requiring educational opportunities, to provide equality of opportunity for all regardless of the barriers of geography and to make the concept of life-long learning a practical possibility.

In the usual NDP tradition we met this challenge head on. One of our first initiatives was to set up the Department of Continuing Education with a mandate to develop an integrated and comprehensive system of adult education opportunities, readily accessible to all people of the province. A second was to establish a universities commission with the responsibility to rationalize spending and co-ordinating development in the university sector. The technical institutes and vocational centres were brought under the purview of the Department of Continuing Education to ensure the co-ordinated and complimentary development of technical vocational training.

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The new department became the vehicle for the negotiation of federal-provincial and interprovincial agreements related to adult education and training. And to ensure that people living in rural Saskatchewan would have access to the same educational opportunities as those in urban areas, we introduced a unique system of community colleges. Starting with four pilot projects six years ago we extended the system to 15 regional community colleges which provide adult education services throughout the province.

The Saskatchewan Indian Community College which is funded mainly by the federal government, but channelled through the Department of Continuing Education, offers programs on Indian reserves and Crown lands throughout the province. Each of the other colleges serves a specific provincial region. The decentralization of adult learning opportunities is reflected in the college's utilization of existing community facilities and resources throughout their regions.

Each community college utilizes community volunteers who identify local learning needs. Community colleges generate and develop their own programs to meet the needs of their own individual communities. Statistics, Mr. Speaker, prove that there was a definite need for accessible educational opportunities in rural areas. Between July 1, 1977 and June 30, 1978, 99,989 adults were enrolled in the 13 southern community colleges. The two northern community colleges are operated by the Department of Northern Saskatchewan.

Last year, 63.3 per cent of college registrations were in rural areas. Enrolment in the non-registered Indian and Metis program totalled 2,260 last year — an increase of 41 per cent over the previous year. The Saskatchewan Indian Community College recorded an enrolment of 3,451 in 1977-78 — an increase, Mr. Speaker, of 97 per cent over the previous year.

Our unique community college system is doing an impressive job of equalizing educational opportunities throughout Saskatchewan. It is coming to grips with the problems of educationally disadvantaged groups and is doing so at a very reasonable cost. Our 1979-80 budget allocates \$5,108,400 for community colleges. This, Mr. Speaker, is an 8 per cent increase over last year's budget.

Let me now turn, Mr. Speaker, to special federal-provincial agreement programs. As I mentioned earlier, the Department of Continuing Education is a vehicle for negotiation of federal-provincial and interprovincial agreements related to adult education and training. One of these is the Adult Occupational Training Agreement. During 1977-78, the last year for which figures are available, we purchased training places for 9,468 trainees in Saskatchewan through the Canada Manpower training program, under this agreement.

Areas of training under this program include industry-based training, adult basic education, skill courses, trades and pre-employment, apprenticeship, agriculture and language training. This fiscal year's allocation for this program is almost \$12 million. Under the Canada Manpower industrial training program our allocation for 1979-80 is \$3,860,000. This program is designed to provide work skills for a variety of employees in response to the specific needs of the industry. Under the terms of this agreement, the federal government provides training-on-the-job situations for disadvantaged, unemployed and employment-threatened persons. Mr. Speaker, because it interfaces with both my cabinet portfolios and the Department of Health, I will briefly mention the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Agreement. Under the agreement,

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vocational training is offered to Saskatchewan residents who suffer from physical or mental disability. In 1977-78, a total of 652 persons received training under this program.

Let me turn very briefly to institutes and vocational centres. This year we are projecting estimates of \$23,176,000 for three technical institutes. We are projecting estimates of \$1,208,000 for the vocational centres. Let me briefly talk about what some of this money will be spent on. In 1977-78, the Saskatchewan Technical Institute at Moose Jaw enrolled a record high, Mr. Speaker, of 5,596 students. It appears to be headed for another record year and is, literally, bursting at the seams. I am pleased, therefore, that the budget announced that in 1979-80 work will begin on the expansion to the Saskatchewan Technical Institute. In the current year, the Wascana Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences is developing a new agricultural program. This program will culminate in the delivery of up to 55 different classes by next fall in co-operation with community colleges throughout the whole province. The Kelsey Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences in Saskatoon last year experienced a 17 per cent increase in the number of apprenticeship students. It recorded a total enrolment of 7,088 students compared with 6,462 in the previous year. Mr. Speaker, Kelsey Institute will receive a total of \$9,763,000 from the Department of Continuing Education this year — an increase of over \$400,000 over last year's allotment.

Although I have only touched on a few points here, I am sure it is evident, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan are deriving real benefit from the co-ordination of our technical institutes and vocational centres. It is obvious to me that this has been money well spent and I am sure that those who have benefited from the programs offered at these institutes would readily agree with me.

Let me now, Mr. Speaker, turn to university support. There has been, Mr. Speaker, recently much talk about this government's support of our universities. In fact, I think it is fair to say that we have been under attack from many quarters concerning the grants to Saskatchewan's universities. Let me counter this attack with the facts, Mr. Speaker. The 1979-80 budget allocates a total of \$82,983,270 for the university operation and a total of \$11,025,000 for the university capital construction. In 1970-71 the operating grant for our two universities was only \$28 million — a far cry, Mr. Speaker, from the \$83 million given this year. Between the year 1971-72 and 1979-80, the years of our New Democratic Party government, university operating grants will have increased by 196 per cent. This increase has greatly surpassed increases in any other economic indicators during this same period of 1970-79. The consumer price index, Mr. Speaker, rose by 71 per cent. The average weekly wage rose by 91 per cent. Grants to universities rose by 196 per cent.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, led all provinces in operating grant percentage increases in 1978-79 with \$77,000,122. This was a 10.5 per cent increase last year compared to Ontario's 5.6 per cent and Manitoba's 2.4 per cent. This year, Mr. Speaker, in our budget we have a 7.6 per cent increase compared with Ontario's 4.7 per cent and Manitoba's 5.7 per cent. Let's add those totals for those two years: 5.6 for Ontario last year, 4.2 this year, for a 10.3 per cent increase for two years . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — . . . Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, 2.4 per cent last year, 5.7 per cent this year, for a total of 8.1 per cent in two years; Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, 10.5 per cent last year, 7.6 per cent this year, for a total of 18.1 per cent over two years.

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SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, I ask the members opposite, who is the government in Ontario? Who is the government in Manitoba? I'm sure the member for Indian Head-Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) would answer correctly — Progressive Conservatives. Who is the government in Saskatchewan? NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that everyone would like to have higher increases, but certainly, Mr. Speaker, I don't think anybody can quarrel with the increases that this government has given over the last five years to our universities. They have increased on an average yearly basis of 13.1 per cent compared to the rate in many of the other provinces of less than 4 or 5 per cent.

In the 1976-77 fiscal year the continuing education estimates call for a total of nearly \$116 million. The allocation for university operation grants in that year was \$64 million, or 55.2 per cent of the budget for continuing education. The universities' share of the continuing education budget has continued to increase each year since then to 58.2 per cent in the current fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, may I repeat, let the facts speak for themselves.

Let me now turn to student assistance. Despite what was suggested at the demonstration held by the University of Regina Students' Union at the legislature yesterday, tuition fees in Saskatchewan are still below the national average. A survey of 23 universities across Canada reveals that the average tuition fees per student amounts to \$642 nationally, compared with \$628 in Saskatchewan. Tuition fees have also increased at a much slower rate than the increase in total university spending. Tuition fees accounted for 26.8 per cent of the total university revenue in 1964-65, 21.8 per cent in 1969-70, and Mr. Speaker, only 11.7 per cent in 1978-79. However, our government recognizes that costs have increased to students attending our universities and technical schools. Accordingly, we have allocated \$7,108,780 to the student aid fund this year. The total amount now available to the student bursary plan is \$4,270,000, a 31 per cent increase over the previous year, Mr. Speaker. I want to repeat, a 31 per cent increase over bursaries for those students who are in need.

In 1971-72, only \$627,550 was spent on student bursaries. Average assistance to students through loans and bursaries has increased substantially over the past few years. In 1976-77, the average amount was \$1,564; in '77-78, \$1,848; in '78-79, it is estimated it will reach \$2,140. We have recently heard students complain that our bursary and loan programs are not generous enough and maybe they aren't, Mr. Speaker. But I think the question that has to be asked is this, are students entitled to a completely debt-free education for as long as they wish to attend a post secondary institution? Is it unfair to ask them to repay a low interest loan after they are out in the work force, working at a job that they probably obtained due to the skills and education they have acquired at our institutions of higher learning? Mr. Speaker, my answer to both of those questions is no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, let me conclude my remarks on the Department of Continuing Education. In the introductory remarks, I outlined some of the many needs in the field of continuing education that faced our government when we assumed office

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in 1971, I stated that one of our first initiatives was to set up the Department of Continuing Education with a mandate to develop an integrated and comprehensive system of adult education, opportunities readily accessible to all people of the province. I think the impressive record of achievements I have been able to briefly refer to in this address illustrates the wisdom of establishing the Department of Continuing Education. Through it, we have been able to develop a comprehensive system of adult education opportunities which are accessible to people throughout the province. We have made great strides towards meeting the needs of the educationally disadvantaged, the geographically remote, native people, poor people, school drop-outs, people undereducated or undertrained for the careers of their aspirations, and people requiring retraining because their employment became a casualty of the technological revolution. We have made education a life-long process for the people of this province no longer restricted to the young living in urban centres. Post-secondary education is now available to all.

Mr. Speaker, we are achieving these things within the province's budgetary resources. I believe the department's estimates represent the fullest possible recognition of the need for economy, but at the same time they represent a level of support that will permit continued progress in the field of continuing education.

Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to turn to the Department of Social Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, it certainly has been my privilege to be the Minister for the Department of Social Services for the past four years and right from the start, Mr. Speaker, I want to dispel a myth that has unfortunately been spread about in recent days. This budget does not mean, Mr. Speaker, a reduction in social services for Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Unlike some others in Canada, this government does not believe that economic expansion should be financed by cutting social services. It is impossible to promote a sound economic climate without also developing social service programs that are fair and compassionate.

Mr. Speaker, the facts will speak for themselves. In 1978-79, Social Services had a total budget of \$192.7 million. For the upcoming fiscal year, we are requesting \$216,037,640. This is an increase of \$23.34 million, or 12.1 percent — compared to the projected spending increases of 9.5 per cent for the government as a whole — and I want to certainly take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance and my colleagues for supporting these increases.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, I would not for a moment wish to understate the difficulties faced in adequately funding Social Services, especially because of recent steps taken by the federal government. These include their failure to deliver on promised revisions to the arrangement for cost-sharing services and changes in the unemployment insurance program. But we have not, and never will let these problems dictate our social policy choices.

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I would now like to briefly touch upon some of the ways in which the Department of Social Services 1979-80 budget will be allocated.

Let me first turn to the family income plan. As members of this House know, this government pioneered the country's most innovative income assistance program for low-income families.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — It is called, Mr. Speaker, the Family Income Plan. It is most appropriate that, in this the International Year of the Child, increases in the income exemption levels and the amount of benefits paid under this plan have been announced. The basic income exemption level has been increased to \$6,200 from \$5,500. This means that a family will receive full benefits under the plan if their 1979 income is less than \$6,200, not including family allowance payments. Because of this increase it is estimated that an additional \$4.2 million will be spent and an additional 3,000 families will benefit. Monthly payments for each child have also been increased by 25 per cent and will now provide a maximum monthly payment of \$50 for each of the first three children and \$40 for each additional child.

Mr. Speaker, we should be thankful that Saskatchewan has a program which can be used to deliver financial assistance directly into the hands of families. Mr. Speaker, \$13.1 million will be spent on the family income plan benefits this year.

Let me now, Mr. Speaker, turn, very briefly, to the new rate structure for foster parent homes. Speaking of families with children brings to mind children without families. There are presently 1,604 children in the care of foster parents in Saskatchewan. As an aside, Mr. Speaker, it is a sad note to know that the fastest growing category of people on public assistance are the single-parent families throughout Canada. I am told at the present time that there are about 80,000 children who are in the care of the ministers of social services in this nation. I think it is appropriate that in the International Year of the Child the provincial governments, and particularly our government, are taking steps to try and support the family unit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — We are grateful, Mr. Speaker, for the invaluable services provided by our foster parents and are pleased to introduce a new rate structure for foster parent homes. The new structure will standardize the rates throughout the province and provide appropriate remuneration for services provided by foster parents. Under the new rate structure there will continue to be a basic maintenance allowance for all children in care. However, because we know that some children require more time and attention than others, the new structure provides for special services. The basic maintenance rate ranges from \$135 per month for each child four years of age and under, to \$176 per month for each child 13 years of age and over and \$154 for children between these two age groups.

The 1979-80 budget allocates \$5,595,860 for the care of children in foster homes. We do not feel that these children should want for anything, simply because they are not in their natural parental homes.

Mr. Speaker, let me now turn to day care. Many of the urban members, and I would hope rural members, would be keenly interested in what is happening in day care. This

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government, I think, recognized many years ago there existed in the province a definite need for a comprehensive day care program. We launched such a program in 1974 and I think, Mr. Speaker, that it is true to say that I have received a fair amount of criticism for not expanding the program faster than what I have: but we are continuing to improve upon it, even now.

This year, the adjusted income eligibility levels will be raised from \$825 to \$875. This means that a family with an adjusted income of \$870 per month or less is now eligible for the maximum day care subsidy. As the income rises above \$875, the subsidies decrease accordingly. This change will be effective, Mr. Speaker, on July 1, 1979.

The 1979-80 budget contains funds for major enrichment of the allowances to families using day care services. Formerly, parents using day care homes were eligible to receive a maximum subsidy of 80 per cent of the total cost of day care, up to \$100 per month. This will be increased to a maximum of 90 per cent of the total cost, up to \$120 per month. Users of family day care centres who used to be eligible for a maximum subsidy of 90 per cent of the cost, up to \$140, will now be able to receive subsidies up to \$150 per month.

Let me use a couple of examples to illustrate how the new subsidies will affect users of day care services. Let us use the example of a two-parent family with two children, one in full-time day care. Assuming that both parents work and earn a combined monthly income of \$1,390, their adjusted family income, for purposes of calculating day care subsidies becomes \$1,090 per month.

Mr. Speaker, the adjusted family income is real income minus standard deductions, for example, the Canada Pension Plan, union dues, etc., minus \$100 per child. The new subsidies mean that if this family is using a day care centre which costs \$160 per month, their subsidy will now be \$72 per month, leaving them to pay \$88 per month. If they are using a family day care home which costs \$150 per month, their subsidy will be \$48, leaving them to pay the remainder of \$102 per month.

Let me use another example of a single parent family, and these are the ones who are really in need of day care. With one child in day care, let us assume that the parent earns \$1,000 per month plus \$20 family allowance. If you subtract the \$70 in standard deductions and the \$100 for the one child, the parent's adjusted family income totals \$850 per month. With this income the parent would be eligible for the maximum subsidy of 90 per cent of the cost of care. This means that if the child was in a day care centre costing \$160 per month, the subsidy would be \$144 per month, leaving the parent to pay only \$16 per month. If the child was in a family day care home costing \$150 per month, the subsidy would be \$120 and the parent would only have to pay \$30.

Mr. Speaker, we will spend an estimated \$2.5 million in allowances for day care in 1979-80 and I feel it is money well spent. I believe day care should be affordable for everyone in Saskatchewan and I think I can safely say that it now will be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, the increase of the daycare budget from \$2 million to \$2,783,000 is almost a 40 per cent increase for day care. Mr. Speaker, I don't apologize for that. This, after all, is the International Year of the Child.

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Can we now turn to senior citizens? I have touched briefly on the younger segment of our society. I would like to now move to the other end of the spectrum and talk about our senior citizens. Last year this government budgeted close to \$200 million for programs aimed directly at improving the quality and quantity of services available to our senior citizens. Although I do not have the statistics for 1979-80 at hand, I am sure that this year we will be spending more. My own department has budgeted \$7,927,000 for payments under the Saskatchewan Income Plan to senior citizens in this fiscal year and will pay out approximately \$10.9 million in Saskatchewan Assistance Plan payments to persons over 65 years of age. Subsidies for certain residents of special care homes have been increased. Level III residents will now be eligible for a subsidy of \$464 per month. Subsidies for level II residents have been increased to \$156. These new subsidies represent an 8 per cent increase and will cost an estimated \$3.2 million. The total amount budgeted for residents of special care homes, as the Minister of Finance has already mentioned, is \$28.7 million.

We will also be supporting the construction of up to 130 new special care home beds in six different communities at an estimated cost of \$1.293 million. As members of this House know the Home Care program was initiated to give our senior citizens an alternative to special care institutions. Many senior citizens do not require round-the-clock medical attention; they simply require a meal service or a handyman service or a home nursing service. We have budgeted \$9.6 million for grants to provide home-care services in the 1979-80 fiscal year. Our senior citizens told us that this is what they want. Mr. Speaker, we listened; the Minister of Finance acted.

We are proceeding with the development of district home care boards in 1979. These boards will have full responsibility for the operation of the program with discretion to add programs according to local need.

Contrary to what members opposite have said in the past, we believe in decentralization. We believe that each community is the best judge of what that community needs and we believe it is prudent, as a matter of policy, to steadily increase the level of community involvement in the delivery of social services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to now talk briefly about grants. I know that there have been rumors going around lately about the wholesale cutting of community grants in my department. I would like to squelch those rumors right now, Mr. Speaker. In 1979-80 community service grants totalled about \$12.3 million. In 1979-80, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know where the Leader Post got its story, but its not going to be \$12.3 million. In 1979-80 it's going to be \$19.556 million, an increase of almost 60 per cent. This figure includes \$4.2 million for grants under the employment support program, \$3.6 million for grants to community service organizations, \$9.6 million for grants to programs providing home care services. and \$1.7 million to social service agencies. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that this coming year will see more expansion in the general area of grants for community-delivered social services than in virtually any other area of the social service department.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Social Services is significantly increasing the actual delivery of social services by community-run agencies. I strongly favor the build-up of an increasing capacity for the community itself to meet its own social service needs. In this government the improvement of social services does not mean a corresponding growth of the government, and in 1979 in particular, we will see a major expansion in the community's ability to directly provide its own services.

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I want to now briefly turn to corrections. Mr. Speaker, 1979-80 will be literally a building year for corrections. We are expending \$7 million this year toward the cost of new facilities in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Creighton, and Buffalo Narrows. This year we will also develop the St. Louis Alcohol Treatment Centre and, Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate this is a treatment centre for low-risk offenders who have alcohol problems. It is not, basically, a correctional centre as reported by some of the papers. Mr. Speaker, our objective with the creation of these and other facilities such as probation hostels and community training residences is to have a more flexible and varied range of options to the traditional response of physical custody. Our policy is to develop alternatives to the passive and unproductive doing of time. Society has a right to be protected, but protection is not only a matter of walls and wire. We continue to seek ways of promoting law-abiding and productive behavior by those placed in our correctional facilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Let me now turn to staffing, management and my conclusion, Mr. Speaker. All of the things I have mentioned in this brief address will be accomplished without any major staffing increase in the Department of Social Services. In 1978-79 the department had 2,265 positions; in 1979-80 it will have 2,287 — an increase of 1 per cent. This was accomplished by making staffing reductions that almost exactly corresponded to the expansion of other areas such as home care, corrections, or special care. As I have documented, 1979 will see more growth in the level and quality of social services available to the people of Saskatchewan.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — This is being achieved by the increasing involvement of the community without and stringent management within. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we have proven that it is possible both to keep up with the demand for increased services and to keep control over the growth of the department. I am proud, Mr. Speaker, of the accomplishments of this government and of my department in the past and as you can see my time is up and I will certainly be supporting the Minister of Finance and the Blakeney government in a most prudent and worthwhile budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Speaker, I would now ask the House to permit me to adjourn the debate on this issue.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02.