

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 23, 1982

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MRS. DUNCAN: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you, and to members of the Assembly, a group of 24 Air Cadets sitting in the east gallery. They have travelled here to Regina today with their commanding officer, Captain M. Clary. They are accompanied by two chaperones, Mrs. Eleanor Clary and Connie Flaherty. They had a bit of trouble starting out, Mr. Speaker, but they resolved the problems with the bus and they were able to get here on time. I hope you have an enjoyable day in Regina and enjoy the proceedings of the House in the next half hour. We think question period is one of the most exciting times of the day. I will be meeting with you at 3 o'clock for pictures and drinks.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. PEPPER: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and to welcome another group of grade 8 students. I think they are some 54 in number from the Weyburn Junior High School. They are sitting in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, and are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Jim Nedelcov and Mr. Dale MacNaughton, and their bus drivers, Mr. Les Stock and Mr. Wayne Vilela. This, Mr. Speaker, completes the total number of grade 8 students from Weyburn Junior High who were to have visited this Chamber this year in 1982. I'm sure that I am expressing the wishes of all members that their visit here in the Legislative Building proves knowledgeable and pleasant for them.

Might I add, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this will be Mr. Nedelcov's 15th consecutive year chaperoning the grade 8 students to our building, a record in itself I assure you.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — I look forward to meeting with the students a little later this afternoon. I am sure that it is the wish of all members here that they have a safe journey back home. Thank you.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PICKERING: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to all members of this Assembly, 17 grade 12 students in the east gallery. They are accompanied here today by their teacher, Mr. Duncan McKeller, and their bus driver, Charlie Dombowsky. I had the opportunity to meet with the group for pictures and a drink just prior to coming into the House. I would hope that they enjoy the question period and the tour they will be having following question period. A portion of the girls' high school team and a portion of the boys' high school team that are going to the provincial finals this weekend is here. I hope all members will join me in wishing them

luck. I hope they enjoy their stay here and have a pleasant journey back home.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a group of visiting students from my constituency who, I believe, are in the Speaker's gallery. They're from W.P. Bate. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislative Assembly in Regina. It is a group of grade 8 students numbering 36 in total. They are accompanied by Mr. Garry McKenzie and Mr. Ron Boden of the school. It was my pleasure to have visited W.P. Bate a couple of weeks ago. We had a very lively question and answer period. It's a pleasure to see them here in Regina. I'll be seeing them for pictures and drinks later, too. Thank very much.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

Alleged Interference Concerning Egg Marketing Board

MR. ANDREW: — My question is to the Attorney General. Yesterday we delivered to you copies of correspondence we had obtained regarding the egg marketing board in Saskatchewan. Accusations were made in that correspondence of political interference in the workings of the marketing board. As well, there was some doubt raised as to whether or not there was interference by the Department of Agriculture in the judicial process itself. As the chief law enforcement officer of the province of Saskatchewan, could you advise this Assembly what investigations members of your department have made with regard to these accusations.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — First of all, I've not yet had an opportunity to fully consider the documentation which has been forwarded to me, but I must say (I could be wrong on this) that my reading of the material does not corroborate or support the statements of the hon. member about allegations of interference in the judicial system.

It is correct to say that there are allegations of political interference in the operations of the egg marketing board, which may or may not be the subject of a political debate. The question is whether or not there is anything beyond that. The material that was forwarded to me does not seem to indicate this. In any event, to make my answer more complete I have raised this matter with the deputy attorney general to see what his opinion is. His preliminary opinion seems to be the same as mine. I'll have further information from them in the next while.

MR. THATCHER: — Supplementary question to the Attorney General. Mr. Attorney General, are you telling this Assembly, or are we interpreting you correctly when you suggest that correspondence from Linda Boxall to the Minister of Agriculture suggesting political interference by both the Minister of Agriculture and the MLA for the constituency involved ("blatantly political," I think, is how she described it and "muddy") - are you suggesting that is not a serious matter? Is the Attorney General telling us that a matter such as this, which has been in his hands for some 24 hours now, has not been investigated any more extensively than he has indicated at this point?

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I'm telling the hon. member precisely what I told the first questioner about the activities of the Department of the Attorney General. We will take as much time as we need to examine this. I have not seen the words "blatantly

political." There is in that letter the statement:

. . . that the board has been concerned over the recent apparent political persuasion used by members of your ministry (if I am reading the letter correctly) in attempts to keep the issue out of the public forum of a court case.

That may be an issue; it may be an issue properly debatable, but whether it's an issue which falls into the court of competent jurisdiction or a legal aspect is something which I am not able to agree on with the hon. member opposite and would require more advice and information before I even get to that point.

MR. THATCHER: — A supplementary question to the Attorney General. Mr. Attorney General, on numerous occasions you have demonstrated a very ruthless lack of hesitancy to use your Department of the Attorney General for political purposes. I want your assurance today that you will not be using your department as a means to shield a minister, as you have used your department to attack opposition to the New Democratic Party, and I want your assurance today that this matter is not going to be swept under the rug under the guise of being investigated by the deputy minister or somebody else in your department until it can very conveniently be forgotten by the potential calling of an election. In other words, are you prepared to give us a clear, definitive statement when your department will tell us what their findings are in this matter?

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to give that assurance to the hon. member and, of course, by the hon. member's questions, it's a no-win situation. He does not want the Attorney General involved in the decision because that would be political, and he doesn't want it in the hands of the deputy attorney general because it would be swept under the table and hidden under some unknown timetable. So you can't deal with it that way either. You simply can't deal with it in any way which seemingly would satisfy the hon. member for Thunder Creek, except for the inevitable conclusion which they have jumped to for political reasons and which, as I say, requires much more careful consideration than that.

MR. LANE: — Would the Attorney General, keeping in mind past problems he's had with time, be investigating the great delay that seems to have taken place on actions against the Bouffards and also take into account allegations in the chronological listing of events from the chairman of the board that, in fact, in November the solicitor for Mr. Bouffard stated that his client had in fact breached the regulations? Will the Attorney General be investigating the length of time that it took to bring this matter to a head?

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we may or we may not in the department be investigating that. It strikes me on first reading that that is very much a secondary issue. The fact of the matter is that a charge has been laid. Nobody has been prejudiced by the fact that the charge has been laid. It also seems apparent to me, from examination of the documentation, that there was an opinion held that in the matter of a provincial statute, such as concerning egg marketing under the marketing control legislation, where possible there ought to be a resolution, not by virtue of the full mechanism of the law but wherever possible, particularly in this case presumably, to work out some form of a conciliation committee hearing or some form of conciliation to avoid the matter going to court. One may disagree with that posture, but I think one can also see a positive side to that point of view, if that were the position that were being advocated and at issue. So, accordingly, it strikes me on first reading and on further

consideration of the matter that that aspect of the hon. member's question is, to me, very much a peripheral issue and of less concern. The fact is the charge has taken place, and it seems that from that point of view the rest speaks for itself.

MR. LANE: — Of course, it's not a matter of lesser concern when you put it in the context that since 1980, when the matter was first raised, and in 1981, November 17, there were admissions by the solicitor for the accused that there are serious allegations that there was political interference through the course of this against the minister in the Department of Agriculture. So I suggest to the Attorney General, and will he not admit, that in fact the length of time it took to get action on this is a matter of serious concern and deserves the same priority under his investigation?

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I hear what the hon. member is saying. I'm not ruling that out as a part of the consideration, but by the same token I would have the hon. members take into account the view that I have offered with respect to this matter. One can read the chronology however one wants to. You can start in 1980 and take the longest construction on it if you want to. Perhaps that's a reasonable construction.

I think an equally reasonable construction is to start in November - or September but certainly November - of 1981 and see the information laid in January, 1982, and say that two months is not an unreasonable amount of time for a charge to ultimately have been made, especially if there was consideration and some thought given to a possible conciliation of this matter or resolution outside the court. This, in a provincial statute of this nature, where one is trying to get acceptance, presumably, of orderly marketing and with the limitation of relatively new concepts in legislation, is an understandable position. It may not, as a consequence, attach any further seriousness to it.

MR. ANDREW: — My question is to the Attorney General. The correspondence indicates, with regards to the sequence of events, that on December 18 Miss Boxall met with not only members of the council but also the entire council to go over this particular matter. If you refer to that particular document, they agreed with us after explanation that "we have little opportunity but to proceed," referring to proceeding to court. That was in December.

Now, can you tell me, Mr. Attorney General, how the Minister of Agriculture can on February 22 say, "No, we need more conciliation; we have to appeal this to the council," when they have already sat and heard it? That would be prejudiced by it, and they would have already made a decision that they should proceed in court.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again I want to be absolutely clear to the members that I will be taking advice from my department officials on this matter, if and when they have completed the study of the issues. But the simple fact of the matter is as I understand it (I have not done a complete study of the bill myself) that the egg marketing plan provides that there shall be a committee known as the egg board conciliation committee, and "the board shall refer all unresolved grievances to the conciliation committee for recommendation." It says not "may" but "shall" refer all unresolved grievances to the conciliation committee.

One can argue that this was an unresolved grievance and one can also argue that the egg marketing group did not follow the compliance of the statute where it says "shall" in referring that to the conciliation committee. One can also argue that the minister is responsible for the administration of that act, including those words and the conduct of

the group. If there is no reference of unresolved grievances to the conciliation committee (by the way, with a subsequent appeal to the full council as this legislation applies), the minister who is responsible for the overall administration of the statute could raise the comments which apparently he did to the appropriate people in February 1982.

MR. LANE: — The Attorney General is fully aware that in such situations a council which is an appeal body that has already heard it cannot re-hear it or it is prejudiced and the individual accused (if the council heard it) would have no difficulty getting the prosecution thrown out in court. I'm sure the Attorney General is fully aware of that.

My question though is to the Minister of Agriculture. I wonder if the minister would mind explaining to us how it is, in his idea or concept of orderly marketing, that the premeeting research of marketing boards takes into account the voting patterns in particular ridings and the voting plurality of cabinet ministers?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of the matters referred to by the hon. member in his question directed to me.

MR. LANE: — The minister has had ample time to inform himself, Mr. Speaker. I am going to quote from a paragraph in a memo from the manager of the egg marketing board to the board of directors marked confidential:

We suggested that since the community of Kincaid is already aroused, the magistrate's court trial would not arouse it further but bring out the facts. They were concerned and were reacting to concerns of MLA Dwain Lingenfelter. Our premeeting research indicated he won the seat in the last election by less than 400 votes on a split vote.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture: what does the plurality of a cabinet minister have to do with orderly marketing and the votes in the administration of a marketing board?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member knows that the correspondence which passes between the chairman of the board and the board members of the egg marketing board is a matter for the egg marketing board and not a matter for the Government of Saskatchewan or a matter for the Minister of Agriculture.

MR. LANE: — Is the Minister of Agriculture stating that he and his officials have not had access to the materials before the egg marketing board?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, we receive the minutes, as I understand it, of the egg marketing board meetings and they are reviewed by the natural products marketing council. That's the information I understand that is made available to us, let us say, the government, but it is made available to the natural products marketing council.

MR. LANE: — I wonder how the Minister of Agriculture justifies the statement made by the chairman of the board that "this board has been concerned over the recent apparent political persuasion that has been used by members of your ministry in attempts to keep this issue out of the public forum of a court case"? I suggest to you that that indicates there was significant political interference by the ministry of agriculture. I'll ask the minister now to tell us: are there any directives from the Department of Agriculture that in fact marketing boards must take into account the political plurality of cabinet ministers?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Qu'Appelle knows the correspondence that has transpired between me and the chairman of the egg marketing board because he has a copy of the correspondence. I understand it was made available to members of the legislature here yesterday, and in no way whatsoever would I say that the hon. member, or anyone else, can interpret political interference. The hon. member, from my correspondence to the chairman of the egg marketing board, can interpret that; that's fine. For my part, I do not. Mr. Speaker, in my correspondence to the egg marketing board I make no reference to the court case at all in terms of seeking to suggest that the board should withdraw from its court case.

I do very clearly and I very emphatically express disappointment that the use of conciliation, that the use of appeal through the natural products marketing council wasn't provided. And I will continue to do so as I deal with situations with respect to orderly marketing, egg marketing boards, and whatever. I think the opportunity for farmers to have available to them conciliation is essential in dealing with matters of disputes. I think it was essential here, and I support that position, and I continue to express my disappointment to the egg marketing council that that wasn't followed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. THATCHER: — Supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, may I refer to correspondence one year earlier of one Harry-Jae Elder, where Mr. Elder in his correspondence to you says: "The appropriate course of action is to access the excess layer fees and to collect such fees through the courts." That was in correspondence to you. Harry-Jae Elder further goes on to say: "The board should also carefully weigh the cost and benefits of prosecution of these persons, aside from the legal aspects." Mr. Minister, I invite your comments on these, when one year earlier Harry-Jae Elder is recommending that this matter go to court.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Correspondence addressed to whom?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, I have a copy in the file of a letter dated February 5, 1981, signed by Harry-Jae Elder, chairman of the natural products marketing council. It is addressed to Mr. Keith Colburn, chairman, Saskatchewan Commercial Egg Producers' Marketing Board, Box 183, Delisle, Saskatchewan. My name happens to be Gordon MacMurchy. I'm the Minister of Agriculture. My address is either 328 Legislative Building, Government of Saskatchewan, Regina, or my address is Semans, Saskatchewan.

MR. ANDREW: — A question to the Minister of Agriculture. When you wrote the letter to one Linda Boxall on February 22, 1982, were you aware at that time that one month earlier an information had been sworn out before the court charging this Mr. Bouffard in a court of law? Were you aware that that charge was in fact laid?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, yes, I was, and in my letter to the chairman I made no reference at any time to suggest that the board should drop the court case against the Bouffards. If the hon. member can see it there, that's fine. I simply can't see it there. I ask the hon. member to consider very carefully the letter and, if he can find it there, point out to me where I suggest that the board should drop the court case against the Bouffards.

MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Minister of Agriculture, in that letter that you wrote you indicated,

and I quote:

I am disappointed that the board proceeded with court action.

You also said at the start of it:

However, I remind you that as Minister of Agriculture, under the terms of The Natural Products Marketing Act, I bear the final responsibility . . .

What inference did you have in that letter, other than to tell that board to get their case out of court and get it settled before it proceeded any further?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, I answered the question of an hon. member opposite (not that particular hon. member) along the same lines earlier.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that in my letter I suggest, and suggest emphatically, that I would prefer the board's proceeding on the basis of providing conciliation and appeal to the natural products marketing council before we get into the courts, before we get into the police. I think that's a legitimate position to take as the Minister of Agriculture, and I say to the hon. members opposite and that hon. member for the constituency of Kindersley, I will continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — Unfortunately, the minister's letter goes a little further, and I refer to the last paragraph of the letter, where he says:

However, I urge you to meet with council to determine whether it is possible to resolve this dispute through conciliation or an appeal to council.

After it is already in the courts you are asking then to pull it out of the court and take it to appeal, to council or to conciliation. So I suggest to the Minister of Agriculture that in fact you went far beyond the bounds of propriety to say the least, and that when the matter . . . (inaudible interjections) . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! The member before rose and rebutted the answer of the minister. It was the Attorney General. It was improper in the question period because there is nothing in the rules of the question period that allows a member to get up and give a rebuttal. Now the member for Qu'Appelle has stood up and given a rebuttal under the guise of asking a question. I ask the members to adhere to the rules, because when members give argument and debatable comment in this question period, they are bound to generate debate, and there's no opportunity for debate in the question period.

MR. LANE: — I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture has asked his officials if they in fact supplied any of the marketing boards with the voting tabulations of the various constituencies and with the pluralities of the various ministers, so they have that information prior to making decisions?

HON. MR. MacMURCHY: — Mr. Speaker, I have not. I would be glad to ask them, and I will be glad to present to the hon. member the answer to the question.

MR. LANE: — Thank you. When you answer the questions and determine (and I am sure you will) where they got that information . . . I am sure the Minister of Agriculture,

deeply concerned about natural products marketing, will try to find out how any marketing board took into consideration the voting pluralities of cabinet ministers.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski that the Assembly resolve itself into the committee of finance, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Rousseau.

MR. PEPPER: — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak in what will almost certainly be my last budget debate. This budget is a fine budget, and a shining example of what governments can accomplish for their citizens. I congratulate the finance minister, the member for Humboldt, on a job well done.

In the face of hard times the Blakeney government has shown that it puts people first, and that it is no handicap to do so, as some would have us believe. The opposite is true, Mr. Speaker; Saskatchewan's economy has prospered because the New Democratic Party government has worked and continues to work for the people of Saskatchewan to establish and to maintain proper health care, equal education opportunities, and decent working conditions. The achievements of the Blakeney government have been memorable. The budget indicates that as time goes by they continue to grow. I speak from personal experience.

Nearly 18 years have passed since I was first elected as Weyburn constituency's representative in the Saskatchewan legislature. For the past 11 of those years I have been proud to be a member of the Blakeney government. Any fair-minded person who remembers what it was like in 1971, when our government was first elected, will know that many beneficial changes have taken place over the last 11 years. We have seen the establishment of a dental care program, a prescription drug program, a hearing aid program, senior citizens' housing, new nursing homes, a home care program, new hospitals and new schools, premium-free medicare, development of northern Saskatchewan. Yes, we have seen new and innovative programs in agriculture like FarmStart and land bank, and the establishment of voluntary marketing boards for hogs and cattle. There has been greatly increased funding for both rural and urban governments, new highways across the province, community college systems and provincial library systems as well.

These are just a few of the many changes for the better that have taken place in Saskatchewan over the last decade. The Blakeney government's record is one of outstanding social and economic progress and I am proud to have been a part of it. Each step toward economic and social justice has helped prepare the way for the next one. As a result, it seems that we are able to make greater progress as the base we build on strengthens. I think this year's budget proves what I say is true.

The budget is built on the principles that have always guided the New Democratic Party and, formerly, the CCF. The first of these principles is put people first. The central goal of this budget, and the budget which preceded it, is to meet the needs of the people of Saskatchewan through maintaining and expanding government programs

and services.

The second of these principles is to make each budget another step in the province's long-term economic strategy in planning and building for the future. Our long-term economic strategy is based on the careful management of the province's resources and is to smooth out economic cycles to provide stability and prosperity in the face of high interest rates, high inflation, and high unemployment.

The third principle is that the government must manage public funds responsibly.

These three principles of service, honesty, and sound management have served the people of Saskatchewan well. They continue to do so. This budget protects Saskatchewan people from high interest rates, high inflation, and high unemployment through government action.

First, Saskatchewan people will be protected from the rising cost of living. Home-owners with interest rates over 15 per cent will benefit from mortgage interest relief of up to \$2,400 over one year and from a freeze in utility rates as well. Senior citizens will receive a new shelter allowance program to help ensure they can live in decent housing. Financial help will be provided to 20,000 senior citizens whose shelter costs are over 25 per cent of their income. The shelter allowance will especially help those who are living alone. Property tax payers will be protected from rising costs through increased property and renter tax rebates. Families with children will have increased family income plan benefits and day care subsidies and the elimination of the tax on children's clothing and footwear.

Second, Saskatchewan people will be protected from a shortage of affordable housing. Over 4,000 new housing units for those with low and middle incomes will be built throughout the province.

Third, workers will be protected from unemployment and a downturn in the economy by \$2 billion in job-creating capital investment through crown corporations and government agencies and through low-interest loans for small businesses.

The people of Weyburn constituency, Mr. Speaker, will be pleased to know that farmers and rural communities also receive a special emphasis in this budget. A new five-year \$12 million rural capital fund will be established to provide financial assistance for capital projects which are designed to enhance the quality of life in rural Saskatchewan. Effective April 1, 1982, the tax on fuel used in tandem-axle farm trucks will be eliminated. Rural hospitals will receive money for more staff and an increase in the number of special-care beds. The training service for volunteer firefighters will be improved and expanded.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, \$175 million has been budgeted to extend the rural natural gas network. Over the next three years, the natural gas network will be expanded to thousands more customers in rural communities and on farms. So for those who do not have access to natural gas, the Warm Up Saskatchewan program will be expanded by \$75 million, paid by the heritage fund. Home-owners will be eligible to receive interest-free loans up to \$3,000 and rural businesses, community halls, recreation facilities, schools and hospitals will receive up to \$10,000 in interest-free loans for energy-saving activities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these programs in the continued expansion of health and social

programs are made possible by the Blakeney government's resource policies. In 1982 the heritage fund will provide \$900 million for today's needs. That accounts for 27.2 per cent of the total revenue of the province of Saskatchewan. It will pay for \$2,000 worth of services for every family in the province. Resource revenues now bring in more revenue than any other source, including personal income tax.

This budget also maintains the New Democratic Party's commitment to health and social services, which has been well recognized over the years. Nowhere is that more evident than in the budget's health care programs. This year, in the 20th anniversary of medicare and the 35th anniversary of fully-insured hospital services, it pleases me, Mr. Speaker, that we can mark these anniversaries with a 22 per cent increase in our health care budget, providing over \$700 million. That increase will keep Saskatchewan health care healthy, despite the federal funding cutbacks which have damaged the health care offered in other provinces across Canada.

We now recognize that good health care requires more than modern hospitals and trained staff. That is why this budget contains \$50 million for preventive health. Greater mental health services will be offered through community-based programs. Speech therapy services will be doubled, and the campaign to discourage smoking will be expanded. These programs join the extremely successful childrens' dental plan, which has always emphasized preventive health and quality treatment. So I am pleased to see the dental plan will be expanded to children from ages 4 to 16 and will receive a one-third increase in budget to \$17 million.

Social services and education are two other areas which are also introducing important expansion to their programs. In social services the home care program will receive \$17 million in 1982 to expand its services so more senior citizens can live in their own homes, near their families, and lead the most active lives possible. One hundred and thirty-three new nursing beds will be constructed in 1982, and day care will be expanded by 400 spaces this year.

Education will receive a 25 per cent increase in school capital grants, a 15 per cent increase per student in school operating grants, a 17 per cent increase in university operating grants, and a 24 per cent increase for student bursaries.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, as the representative of a constituency where agriculture is so important, I would like to make just a few remarks about the agricultural programs announced in this budget. The tradition of the CCF and the New Democratic Party governments of standing solidly behind the farmers in Saskatchewan goes back to the early days of the Douglas administration when that government fought a successful battle, Mr. Speaker, to save Saskatchewan family farms from the clutches of many of the eastern moneylenders. That commit continued in the 1970s as the Blakeney government established such programs as FarmStart, land bank, and took action to help producers deal with the cost-price squeeze, including \$45 million for hog producers in 1973 and 1974 and \$80 million in grants and interest-free loans for beef producers between the years 1974 and 1976.

Both these groups, Mr. Speaker, have more recently been helped through the hog and beef stabilization programs. This year the province will spend \$10 million on these two programs.

At the same time that farmers were threatened by poor markets, the Blakeney government was defending them against another threat - the loss of the crowrate.

Without the crowrate, Mr. Speaker, and its two principles of equal rate for equal distance and a fixed rate for movement of grain, farming as we know it would disappear.

To protect farmers from high freight rates and the wholesale abandonment the loss of the crowrate would mean, the Blakeney government has proposed that the western provinces join the federal governments and the railways to make a major capital investment in the rail system. This would not be another public gift but an equity investment which would give the West some control, a way to guarantee performance. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan government invested \$55 million dollars in hopper cars. It is a proposal that would work. I am proud, very proud to be on the side of a government that has consistently supported the position of farmers in this struggle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see this budget recognize the higher costs of farming. I have mentioned the elimination of the fuel tax on tandem trucks. FarmStart loan limits have been raised. The total loan limit has been raised from \$150,000 to \$200,000. The subsidized loan limit has been raised from \$90,000 to \$100,000. The net worth limit was increased from \$144,000 to \$185,000. Magnificent increases, Mr. Speaker.

The future of agriculture in Saskatchewan has never been completely secure. In the Blakeney New Democratic Party government, farmers have had a reliable ally in their struggle to achieve a secure and stable farm economy.

The initiatives of this year's budget are the most recent of many changes for the better that have taken place in Saskatchewan over the last decade. The Blakeney record is one of social and economic progress. I am proud to have been part of that progress.

As I prepare, Mr. Speaker, to leave public life, I want to thank the many fine people who have given me encouragement and support over the years. I can assure you that I'm retiring with the satisfaction of knowing that the constituency of Weyburn has shared in the benefits of Saskatchewan's progress. My time in the legislature has been very worth while.

In the near future the electorate of Saskatchewan will be making a choice between continuing to build on what has been achieved in Saskatchewan or tearing it down and starting off in a different direction. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Blakeney government's course is the right one for Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEPPER: — I urge the people of Weyburn to follow that course. I hope our constituency will continue to have representation in the government after the next election. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure from the remarks I have made you will recognize that I am supporting the budget. Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Speaker, it is with a feeling of great pride that I stand in support of this budget. I want to extend congratulations to the Minister of Finance for such an outstanding document. In a time when other governments are operating on

large deficits and are cutting programs, we have provided a balanced budget which provides large increases for worth-while programs and the necessary capital for important new initiatives. It is, as well, a budget with the right priority, a budget in which people really do come first.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said that we reap what we sow. I believe that for the past 11 years our government has provided honest and effective government in tune with the needs of the people of this province. In return for careful planning in the resource sector, we have secured a better deal for our people and the rewards are evident. Eleven years ago there was no dental plan for our young people. There was no hearing aid plan or aids for independent living. There was no family income plan for low-income wage earners. We were without land bank, FarmStart and the hog assured returns program. There was no Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and there was no money for a heritage fund.

Mr. Speaker, as a representative of one of Saskatchewan's rural constituencies, the constituency of Quill Lakes, I am proud that this government has always shown support for Saskatchewan towns and villages and for the rural way of life. In this budget, for example, we are planning for a new rural gasification program. In my constituency, this will provide natural gas to the village of Esk, and Kandahar will be in line in future development. In the last few weeks, I have been busy visiting some of the communities in my constituency. I was in Lanigan the other day to present a cheque for \$86,000 for the renovation and expansion of the Lanigan hospital. I attended Watson to sign an agreement for \$44,000, a new five-year regional park agreement with other municipalities. I want to say that I was in Wynyard the other day to announce the new social services office which will open soon, which will have a complement of six staff and offer a full range of social service programs. I want to say, in addition, a senior citizens' housing project has been approved for Jansen and the construction will begin this summer.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the most recent initiatives in my constituency. It is evidence of this government's commitment to the people of rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that these are difficult times for our province, our country, and the world. Canada and the world are in the midst of a recession, a recession that has brought hardship and gloom to every walk of life. In Canada the rate of inflation stands at the highest level in 33 years. Just last month the consumer price index went up 1.2 per cent. Unemployment in Canada is a monstrous 9.7 per cent; 1,120,000 Canadians are without work. The economic growth in Canada is expected to be less than 2 per cent in the coming year. This is a dismal picture that I paint; usurious interest rates, crippling unemployment, astronomical inflation.

Liberals and Conservatives alike offer only one prescription, one cure for these problems; more of the same. Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the Conservatives alike, when faced with these problems come up with the same tired rhetoric. Who is to blame for these problems? That's obvious they say - the poor, the sick, the infirm. It's those who ask of society the right to a decent job, to good health, and decent housing. These demands, say the Liberals, are unrealistic. Their spokesmen - the Thatchers, Lyons, MacEachens and the Reagans - call on the sick, the infirm, the jobless to make the sacrifices, to bite the bullet. Well, perhaps the most important question to be asked of these people is: who is shooting the bullet? Mr. Speaker, I would like to illustrate the profound difference between the New Democratic Party and the other political parties in Canada. This is the tale of three budgets: that which Mr. Crosbie proposed and which the people disposed, that which Mr. MacEachen provided and which the people

derided, and that which Mr. Tchorzewski presented and the people applauded.

How do you solve inflation and unemployment and usurious interest rates? Mr. Crosbie thought he had a solution. He had carefully read and observed the dictionary of simple economic myths by Ronald Reagan. He had listened spellbound to the words of that other great economist, Sterling Lyon, who had added to the dictionary of economics the marvellous phrase "acute protracted restraint" to describe the incredible damage and misery that he had brought upon the people of Manitoba and for which he was so richly rewarded when he gave the electorate a chance to express their feelings about acute protracted restraint.

And armed with this gospel according to the neo-conservatives, Mr. Crosbie labored mightily on his budget. He knew the slogans well - misery seeks company; hard times can only be cured by more hard times; in order to reach for the top you must first hit the bottom. And he accomplished his aim. His first budget was a masterpiece of neo-conservatism. He taxed the poor and the sick and the infirm with his energy policy. He did nothing for unemployment. The jobless would have to make the sacrifices. He did nothing to lower interest rates. They were necessary to encourage continual foreign ownership of our resources and industry. But, Mr. Speaker, he did some things. He gave millions of dollars to the oil industry; he cut taxes for the wealthy. For being rich, they obviously deserved more. Mr. Speaker, it was his first budget; I predict it will be his last budget.

This past year the federal Liberals, flushed with power, watched and listened as MacEachen brought forward his budget. And who were his teachers, Mr. Speaker? Who did he look to for solutions? Well, the answer was obvious. He, too, had learned the obvious. He, too, knew who were the experts. He, too, had listened to the Thatchers, the Lyons, The Reagans, and even to Mr. Crosbie. He brought in the same budget Mr. Speaker,. Oh, there were a few cosmetic changes, but basically it was the same document. Mr. MacEachen launched his Big Mac attack - a stale bun for the jobless and two old beef patties courtesy of low beef prices to the farmers, and he imported lettuce so he wouldn't discourage foreign investment. Mr. Speaker, there was one final ingredient - a special sauce in the form of lower taxes for the rich. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the rich deserved a break today from Mr. MacEachen, and he gave it to them.

Marie Antoinette said, "Let them eat cake," Pierre Trudeau said, "Let them eat crow." And MacEachen said, "Only the rich can afford to eat." I say, what is the reaction of the people to this budget? I want to say that the people didn't like it very much. Robert Kaplan called it a political disaster. Monique Begin said that it did nothing for the unemployed. And they were his friends, his fellow cabinet ministers. The rest of Canada was much more unkind - all except John Crosbie, who of course was the original author, who had very little to say.

Mr. Speaker, in comparison to our budget I want to say that this budget brought down provides protection for people of Saskatchewan, but provides it in the following ways: protection from the high interest rates, protection from inflation, protection from the threat of unemployment. And, Mr. Speaker, all of this is being done without raising taxes and with a balanced budget.

As a member of the New Democratic Party, and as Minister of Consumer and Commercial Affairs, these are two aspects of this budget which I am particularly proud to support. We have often heard the old adage "A man's home is his castle." Everyone agrees with that old saying, but here in Canada the policies of the Liberals and the

Tories alike have not only made it virtually impossible for young people to buy new homes but they are actually causing people to lose their homes.

The interest rate policies of successive Liberal and Tory governments have placed enormous pressure on the home-owner. Security of the family home remains one of the highest priorities of this government. The home-owners' mortgage entitlement program is the second phase of this government's program to assist those caught in a financial squeeze by the federal government's high interest rate policies. The HOME program, as we are calling it, will provide eligible home-owners with some \$20 million in direct assistance. Approximately 25,000 home-owners whose mortgage rate exceed 15 per cent will benefit from this program.

Mr. Speaker, a good deal has been said and written about the first phase of our home-owners' program - The Home-owners' Protection Act - since it was introduced. One commentator had this to say about it:

The Saskatchewan government, to its credit, has just made it illegal for families to be forced from their homes because they cannot afford to pay painfully high mortgage rates. This law will ensure that decent, hard-working people won't be run out of their homes by high interest rates.

The cause of all this is Ottawa's misguided policy of encouraging high interest rates . . . Ottawa seems prepared to tolerate an unbearably high price in economic stagnation, business and farm bankruptcies, unemployment and now even in letting some families lose the very roof over their heads.

If the Saskatchewan government's policies are rough ones, at least they are compassionate policies . . . It's a novel and humane approach to a heartbreaking problem. It's the sort of protection that the Ontario government, and Ottawa for that matter, should be studying with keen interest.

Those comments, Mr. Speaker, were found on the editorial page of the *Toronto Star*. Unfortunately no other government in Canada has come up with a program to prevent people from losing their homes - no other government, except the New Democratic government in Manitoba. But, elsewhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker, from Tory Newfoundland to Social Credit British Columbia, there has been much wringing of hands, much wailing in anguish, but no concrete action.

Make no mistake about the reason why this legislation was introduced. There was a real need for this program here in Saskatchewan. Last year in Saskatchewan we averaged almost 80 applications for leave to foreclose per month. There were 965 applications for leave to foreclose last year. How many this year? Well, in spite of the disastrous interest rate policy of the federal government, there have been 34 applications for leave for foreclosure, of which only one has been granted.

Perhaps an editorial cartoon which appeared in the *Toronto Star* best illustrates the situation. A family is seated on their sofa, surrounded by all their worldly possessions. They are obviously getting read to move out of their home. The headline on the newspaper which the father is reading states: 50,000 freed of foreclosure fear in 1982." And the father says, "Only in Saskatchewan, eh?" And mother says, "Pity."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Speaker, the second aspect on which I would like to speak in some detail is the establishment of the commission to review the Saskatchewan Power Corporation rates and public participation in the rate-setting process. This new commission will be charged with the responsibility to examine and to make recommendations or comments on the following areas:

1. The present level of rates charged for natural gas and electricity in Saskatchewan together with the history of rates charged by the Saskatchewan Power Corporation;
2. The present level of rates charged for natural gas and electricity in other Canadian provinces, together with the history of rates charged in those provinces;
3. The major factors which will influence future rates for natural gas and electricity in Saskatchewan such as interest rates, the national energy program and existing energy agreements;
4. Public participation in the rate-setting for electricity and natural gas throughout Canada, and opportunities for the encouragement and enhancement of the public's role in Saskatchewan;
5. Any other related areas which the commission judges to be appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, this commission is a public inquiry under The Public Inquiries Act and, therefore, has the authority to summon witnesses, obtain evidence under oath, and receive such documents as it deems necessary in carrying out its responsibilities. To head this commission we have chosen the former chief justice of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, Mr. E. M. Culliton, a man of highest integrity. This commission is being established because my government is aware that Saskatchewan residents are concerned with the rising costs of energy. Factors beyond our control, such as the national energy program and high interest rates, are contributing to these escalating costs. Understandably, the public is interested in why rates are rising and this interest has motivated us to look at the methods used to inform and involve them in the rate-setting process.

Over the last few months we have been in dialogue with groups such as the Consumer's Association of Canada, Saskatchewan branch. They requested the establishment of a commission to review public participation in the rate-setting process. Our recent initiative is a response to this request.

I would like to emphasize a point that I've maintained on a number of occasions. I believe that the method presently being used for setting utility rates is an open one. Indeed, I think that we have reason to be proud of this system. However, in light of the above considerations, we as a government recognize that now is the time to reaffirm that the public interest is in fact being considered.

Mr. Speaker, we have an open mind on this issue. We believe that, although the present method of setting rates has served the people of Saskatchewan well, it is appropriate at this time to re-examine this issue to see if there are any other realistic alternatives.

Unfortunately, such is not the case with the members opposite. Entrapped by their

blind ideology, they have already arrived at their solution. Did they consult with the people? No. Did they examine the public record? No. Did they examine the Saskatchewan tradition? No. No - in the best tradition of Conservatism, without the benefit of the facts, without consultation, they arrived at their solution; a public utilities board. Why? Because it was used to regulate private utility companies in other provinces and other states. It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the only reason the members opposite wish to impose their bureaucratic solution on the people of Saskatchewan is not to provide better services but to attack the crown corporations. Their final solution is not to establish a public review board but rather to pave the way for their ultimate objective: the selling of the assets of the people of Saskatchewan to the private sector. As the member for Moosomin said,

We are now, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and out of their concern, beginning to question whether or not the government involvement even in utility corporations, let alone resource development through the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, is the route to go.

"Government involvement even in utility corporations" - those are his words. That's what they believe, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have dealt with these issues, but in this budget there is much more for the people of Saskatchewan. These additional programs illustrate profoundly the difference between us and the members opposite. And let me just briefly summarize some of the benefits to the people of Saskatchewan in this budget: an extension of the dental plan to include young people from 4 to 16 years of age, a \$20 billion mortgage subsidy program, a new \$6 million senior citizens' shelter allowance, increases in renters' rebates, senior citizens' school tax rebates and property improvement grants totalling \$8 million, 4,100 new housing units to be built because of this budget, the removal of sales tax on children's clothing and footwear, a freeze of Saskatchewan power rates for residential and farm customers, a \$175 million program to extend natural gas networks to thousands of customers in rural communities and on the farms, a \$75 million expansion to the Warm Up Saskatchewan program to assist those who do not have access to natural gas, and an increase in the operating grant to the Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan by 20 per cent to a total of \$338 million.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is the exact opposite of those brought down by Liberals and Conservatives. Their budgets hurt people; ours protects people. This budget protects the home-owner, the renter, the senior citizen, the family with children, the taxpayer, the small businessman, and the farmer.

Mr. Speaker, this budget protects people of Saskatchewan from the disastrous policies of members opposite. Why, Mr. Speaker, is it so different from the documents of gloom and doom that come from the Liberals and the Tories alike? Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it is because whereas the Liberals and Tories place their belief in the market place, we place our faith in people. Whereas the Liberals and the Conservatives seek only to encourage the growth of corporate sectors, we believe in encouraging the growth in people. Whereas the Liberals and the Tories look to the past for their solutions and groan in dismay, we look to the future with a joyful heart.

Mr. Speaker, the only limitation to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with a strong and active faith in the people of Saskatchewan. Let us move forward in the realization that institutions were created to serve the needs of people. Let us make decisions that need to be made, knowing full

well that no achievement of merit is ever accomplished by shirking decision, by apathy, by timidity, by a lack of commitment.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have a dream - a belief that we can make our province a better place in which to live. We have the resources and we have the people to make this dream a reality. The people must make this choice. The future is in their hands. This budget, Mr. Speaker, provides the people of Saskatchewan with the tools. Working together, we can build that dream.

Mr. Speaker, by my comments, I will be supporting the budget and voting against the amendment.

MR. SKOBERG: — Mr. Speaker, before making my remarks on the budget this afternoon, I am certain that all members of this House and the listening audience would want to join with my colleagues in this House, in particular my colleague for Moose Jaw South, the Hon. Gordon Snyder, in wishing Mayor Herb Taylor of Moose Jaw a speedy recovery.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SKOBERG: — Mayor Taylor's involvement in SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities' Association) executive is well-known, and I know that his people on SUMA have missed him, along with his colleagues on the city council and the citizens of Moose Jaw.

I would also like to congratulate the Minister of Finance at this time for the budget that we have before us that has been geared and earmarked for the benefit of all of our Saskatchewan communities, both people and business alike. It amazes me, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Conservatives opposite say they will not support a budget that makes up for the failings of the federal government, and meets the challenges being faced by our people and our Saskatchewan-based large and small businesses in this province.

It is a pleasure to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, in congratulating the citizens of Moose Jaw and those other centres that are celebrating their 100th birthday this year. Moose Jaw has had a celebrate Moose Jaw 100th birthday committee, under the chairmanship of L. H. 'Scoop' Lewry for some time now. Many functions have been held and many more will be held in the coming months. I personally, on behalf of that committee, invite each and every one of you here today to attend some of those functions and to be our guests in Moose Jaw throughout this 100th birthday celebration.

It is also a pleasure to take part in this budget debate, particularly since it probably will be my last opportunity to rise on behalf of the constituency of Moose Jaw North in this legislature. It has been an honor to represent Moose Jaw North, an honor to represent the city of Moose Jaw over the last seven years. Moose Jaw is a city that has had a difficult time in previous years. We have seen many things happen in that particular city. We have seen a major packing house plant close, three oil refineries close, a flour mill close and a cutback in CP rail personnel, to name but a few. But still, Mr. Speaker, Moose Jaw has remained strong and vibrant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SKOBERG: — She has, and her people have fought back against these odds. Moose Jaw has been able to retain a respectable position in our province and in our nation. I have been fortunate in serving this legislature under the leadership of the Premier, Allan Blakeney. Premier Blakeney has the respect of this House, this province, and this nation. Even those opposite know that the Premier of this province has the respect of all segments of our population, the respect and honesty so necessary to be a leader of such a diversified province as ours in a nation that some people are attempting to destroy.

I have also been fortunate in having had the opportunity of serving this House, and my colleague, the Hon. Gordon Snyder, MLA for Moose Jaw South. His advice and support have made my years most rewarding.

And now Mr. Speaker, for the future. I believe the people of Moose Jaw will want to see two NDP MLAs from their city following the next election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SKOBERG: — There is no question in my mind that two government members can and will represent the desires and wishes of the Moose Jaw businesses and people in a way that will benefit them and their community. I know Moose Jaw will benefit by re-electing the Hon. Gordon Snyder in Moose Jaw South, and electing my successor, Glenn Hagel, in Moose Jaw North.

I need not repeat, Mr. Speaker, the many, many programs that have been strengthened in the budget that we have before us today - a balanced budget. It is a balanced budget that has been lauded by the construction association. What other province has increased its housing budget by 130 per cent in attempting to improve the supply of housing in all communities? How could the Conservatives opposite possibly oppose the provision of adequate housing and job creation programs such as constructing at least 1,000 houses and 500 apartment units for our citizens in this province? Are the Conservatives saying they do not support the construction association in its desire to reactivate the industry? Are the Conservatives not interested in having housing for our Saskatchewan people?

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important programs is the home-owners' mortgage entitlement protection program which will provide up to \$2,400 for those home-owners who are renewing or have recently renewed their mortgages at above 15 per cent. Already the Tories opposite and their absent leader are criticizing this program. Already they are saying loud and clear that those young and not so young people should never have gotten themselves into the present high interest rate situation and should have done without a roof of their own over the heads of their families.

But really, Mr. Speaker, who is to blame for this usurious interest rate? Why did the Conservatives or the Liberals fight to eliminate the 6 per cent ceiling rate which prior to 1967 was protected by federal legislation? Only, Mr. Speaker, the NDP voted against the Bank Act, as it knew that once the 6 per cent ceiling was removed exorbitant interest rates would be charged by the lending institutions with massive profits being chalked up. All of this has been proven to be true, but it would not have happened if the Liberals and the Conservatives had not joined ranks in Ottawa to change the rules concerning mortgage interest rates.

At one time, Mr. Speaker, a home-owner could count on an interest rate of 6 per cent or less, but the Conservatives and the Liberals changed all that after it having been in effect 100 years. For the benefit of those opposite, the then federal housing minister, the Hon. Paul Hellyer, in 1967 helped engineer the removal of the 6 per cent ceiling. I believe those opposite know who Paul Hellyer was. Since 1967, the situation has grown progressively worse with neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals really caring what happens to those people who today are caught in their interest rate web.

In the early days, people's savings were loaned out by the goldsmiths and it was generally termed usury. Today, the people's savings are loaned out by the banks, but instead of calling it usury the banks call it interest.

The Conservatives and the Liberals have been rewarded, Mr. Speaker, for the sudden change in direction as far as interest rate ceilings are concerned. Between 1978 and 1980 the Conservatives and the Liberals have received over \$1.2 million in campaign contributions, some of which has floated down from the federal level to the provincial level of the Conservative Party.

The banks themselves have been rewarded. Since 1977, the five major banks in Canada have reaped a profit of \$967.7 million, an increase of 143.8 per cent most of it on the backs of those people trying to get a mortgage for their homes. I ask you today, my friends opposite, who is using whom to feather their own nests and fill their own pocketbooks?

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention a few of the benefits Moose Jaw itself has derived from this balanced budget. I say Moose Jaw but many similar benefits will apply to other communities in our province. While I realize the actual percentage increase in the revenue-sharing pool for the city of Moose Jaw is not as much as we would like to see, it is based on a formula which applies to all communities in Saskatchewan. A very significant benefit to the economy of Moose Jaw, apart from the urgent need for increased technical and vocational facilities, is the announced over \$5 million additional expansion at the Saskatchewan Technical Institute. This additional phase is over and above last year's expansion which is now under way. Some \$12 million has been allocated to the Saskatchewan Technical Institute expansion, which will not only enhance classroom space and provide more training facilities but also will provide added impetus to the construction industry. The latest \$5 million announced expansion will provide 250 new training spaces and continued assurance of the excellent standard of education that has been evident at the Saskatchewan Technical Institute in Moose Jaw with the administration and the teachers that they do have.

Mr. Speaker, another major item in Moose Jaw and district is the construction of two new dams on the Moose Jaw River. These dams will be at approximately the same locations as the present five-mile dam and Kingsway Dam, where they were previously located. The estimated costs will be in the vicinity of \$1 million. Again, this will not only provide much needed water control and storage, but also jobs during the construction stages. These dams will greatly benefit the users of water, such as Valley View Centre and the wild animal park, and will provide water for the developmental plans of the Wakamow Valley Authority.

Again, we look at the municipal transit assistance program, Mr. Speaker. In 1981-82, the municipal transit grant was \$3 per capita. In 1982-83, the grant has been increased to \$5 per capita. The formula for the incentive grant, which takes into account passengers carried and annual transit deficit, remains unchanged. This means

that there will be an increase of almost \$1.3 million to nearly \$5.6 million in 1982-83 in Moose Jaw alone.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation has played a major role in providing public housing in Moose Jaw and elsewhere. In addition to the most recent senior citizens' development known as High Park, which is almost completed - a 152-unit building which will be known as Victoria Towers - the housing corporation has joined with the city in a land assembly project which will provide much needed land for future development at a controlled price. Tentative new projects will include a 16-unit apartment building for the disabled, a 20-unit family apartment building, 11 family units, 55 single detached units and a 24-unit apartment building in that city. The 1982-83 spending for the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is estimated to be \$6,131,780. This again, Mr. Speaker, particularly for the Conservatives opposite, means more construction investment and more job opportunities for our Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, I believe one of the more important programs to be announced in this budget is the shelter allowance program for senior citizens in Saskatchewan at a cost of \$6 million. Average shelter costs for home-owners and renters indicate that many senior citizens, particularly single seniors, are experiencing shelter problems. Shelter costs will be reduced to 25 per cent of income up to approved shelter-cost ceilings. I might say that of the programs previously mentioned, there are a number of other programs and benefits which will ensure that future generations to come along or today's citizens will continue to enjoy the traditional people first philosophy of the Blakeney government and the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province have and do still have a vision. The vision is shared by government. The vision is not centred on acquiring great wealth or on material success alone. It is something much more. Our grandparents had a vision when they first came to Saskatchewan and when they first came to Canada. They settled to build a society based on co-operation in which young and old alike can grow together, share together and succeed together. They aimed for material success, yes, but with a purpose - a shared purpose, Mr. Speaker. This vision can be summed up by saying that people do come first - not interest rates, not foreign exchange, not profits alone, but people. People do come first and that's what this budget is all about. Mr. Speaker, I will with great respect and honor be supporting the budget which has been put before us at this time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, may I congratulate all members who have participated in this important budget debate? I want particularly to congratulate the Minister of Finance who gave us such a fine address last Thursday, in terms of his fine budget. I want to mention the members who have preceded me today: Auburn Pepper, the member for Weyburn, who spoke so eloquently earlier today. He represents so well the kind of people who have served in this legislature over the years. John Skoberg, the member for Moose Jaw North, just spoke and spoke so eloquently on the subject of this budget.

Mr. Speaker, our province has entered the '80s with promise and confidence. Saskatchewan had the fastest growing economy in Canada during 1981, the ninth consecutive year of positive growth. These facts make a sham of the oft repeated predictions by the members opposite of doom and gloom. Saskatchewan's buoyant

economy, maintained despite the disastrous economic policies of the government at Ottawa, is more than needed proof that the Saskatchewan government, under the leadership of Allan Blakeney, governs for the benefit of this province's people and on behalf of the people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — This is not just my view. It is a view which is widely held, and held even by those who are known to be less than sympathetic politically to this government. The *Toronto Globe and Mail*, on February 27 had in a feature article this quote from a leading government finance official with the financial house of McLeod, Young, Weir:

Saskatchewan is in excellent health, even better than Alberta in terms of future financial footing.

He goes on to say:

The resource sectors look very strong, they have an extremely capable administration and they tend to be a lot more prudent than other provinces in the way they spend their money.

The Government of Saskatchewan has continued and will continue to encourage and support policies which keep vital communities an important part of our way of life. This budget is a confirmation of that. I congratulate the Minister of Finance on that.

There are strong forces at work today, Mr. Speaker, that are determined to end the life of many of rural communities. The Leader of the Conservative Party opposite makes statements in support of the huge corporate farms as the wave of the future. He praises and pushes for the development of inland grain terminals to close down our communities as grain delivery centres, and he publishes papers in support of the elimination of the crowrate. All of these, Mr. Speaker, are directly aimed at ending the life of our rural and smaller communities. The people of this province have labored long to build these communities. The provincial members opposite as well as other politicians in Ottawa in supporting the Liberal and Conservative parties would as a result of their efforts wipe those communities off the map.

We continue, in this government, through new rural initiatives to try to assure that our rural way of life remains as important today as it has been in the past.

Our crown corporations in our government are part of the province and believe in the people of this province. They are the servants of the people - the hired help, as Premier Blakeney has called us.

The Government of Saskatchewan has always based its programs in and for people. Our strength lies with the ability of our citizens to participate fully in Saskatchewan's many opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, spoke earlier of a vision this government shares with the people it serves. Nowhere today is this vision more clearly focussed than on the towns and villages and hamlets and farms of rural Saskatchewan. A healthy and vibrant rural way of life is both our heritage and our future. Much more

than our agricultural economy is at stake if the very roots of our existence here are neglected. The Government of Saskatchewan will vigorously fight the attacks on our rural communities mounted by those who have them under attack. We value our communities and our rural life and we will continue to defend the very existence of those communities.

Last Thursday the Minister of Finance announced that the provincial government will introduce a new rural energy program beginning in April of this year. Today I want to give you more details about this program.

Energy, in terms of costs and supplies, is of critical importance to householders, farms, business, and industry in our province. The past decade has been one of tremendous uncertainty and change. Energy policies, supply and demand estimates and prices have all gone through much change and redetermination.

As a government, we have undertaken, in the midst of all of this uncertainty and change, to help ensure the availability of low cost and reliable energy. We have not, and we do not assume that this is our responsibility alone. Much of our energy supply originates outside of Saskatchewan, and even those supplies located within provincial boundaries are influenced heavily by federal government policies and national and world events. We do not, and cannot, operate in isolation.

Provincial crown corporations and government departments with energy responsibilities have, however, been vigilant during this period of change and uncertainty to ensure that our programs and policies are sensitive to changing conditions and changing circumstances. We have recognized that general energy scarcity and ever-increasing prices make energy conservation absolutely essential. We have recognized that policies and programs must take into account our best estimates of available supplies of different forms of energy. In keeping with this, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation has undertaken to respond with policies and programs appropriate to known conditions of the time. We have given and continue to give conservation, electricity and natural gas each the appropriate emphasis and role in provincial energy programs.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, throughout the 1950s and 1960s natural gas was extended to an ever-increasing number of communities and customers in this province. During this period, natural gas was expected to remain cheap and in abundant supply. This situation changed dramatically in the early and mid-1970s. Both the federal and Alberta governments concluded that natural gas supplies would not continue to be in abundant supply in the future, with some of the most reliable estimates indicating that supplies would run out within a decade. Prices were also projected to increase markedly both in absolute terms and in comparison to other forms of energy.

The Saskatchewan Power Corporation and other gas utilities reacted, understandably and appropriately, by sharply curtailing extensions and expansions of costly transmission and distribution systems. However, these estimates began to change markedly again in the latter part of the 1970s. Exploration work largely associated with the search for new oil supplies uncovered extensive new conventional and frontier gas supplies in Canada. Further, early information associated with the national energy program indicated a likelihood of natural gas prices increasing less markedly and rapidly than other forms of energy.

As a consequence, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation undertook a series of financial and engineering feasibility studies to determine the costs of extending the natural gas system to customers not now served. These studies provided the basic cost data against which any particular extensions could be evaluated in economic terms. As facts on pricing and supplies became more predictable, we undertook as a next step a rural heating study conducted in 1981 and early 1982. The purpose of this study was to determine the appropriateness and advisability of meeting rural space heating needs in the 1980s and 1990s through various energy alternatives including conservation.

This study concluded with a number of major findings, the most significant of which are the following:

First, in general, conversions from oil to electricity for space heating are not generally advisable either from the point of view of the power corporation or individual customers.

Second, oil will become a less and less attractive heating alternative both from the point of view of cost and convenience in the future.

Third, many consumers can obtain more significant cost reductions through conservation than through conversions to other forms of energy.

And fourth, with much-expanded proven reserves of gas and with approved price prospects in relative terms, certain further extensions in the gas distribution system are now advisable.

I wish now to provide you with some details on the programs that will be introduced as a result of these findings.

The new natural gas extension program will commence immediately, with a goal of extending natural gas to 150 communities and several thousand farms not now served by the end of 1985. This will, Mr. Speaker, be the largest and most ambitious program of extension of the natural gas system ever undertaken by the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. The power corporation will invest up to \$175 million in this program by the end of 1985, and I'm pleased to say that a direct grant from the heritage fund will in 1982 alone underwrite \$10 million of this cost.

I do want to make it clear that this program will not reach nearly all of the communities and farms not now served. To do so would cost close to \$1 billion in today's dollars. Such a venture would be wildly uneconomic. The return to the individual customers and to the SPC could never justify such a level of expenditure. We have chosen the responsible route of investing in extensions that can be justified in economic terms, taking all factors into account.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the year 1982, this year approximately 50 towns, villages and hamlets will be brought into the system. The following communities are scheduled to receive gas service in 1982. In the northwest area of the province, which will receive a great deal of attention, the towns of Adanac and Edam, Marshall, Meota, Primate, Ruthilda, Frenchman Butte, Goodsoil, Lashburn, Maidstone, Marsden, Mervin, Neilburg, Paradise Hill, Paynton, Peerless, St. Walburg, Spruce Lake, Turtleford, Vawn, and Waseca will be included in the program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — In the east and central areas of the province, the communities of Atwater, Bangor, Bounty, Bradwell, Esk, Markinch, Meacham, Otton, Sanctuary, St. Isadore de Bellevue, Sheho, Tuffnell, Valparaiso and Zelma will be included in the program. In the southern area of the province, Bracken, Kendal, Kroneau, Limerick, Melaval, Meyronne, Orkeney, Rhineland, Springfield, Val Marie and Woodrow will be included in the program.

Mr. Speaker, these are just the communities for the year 1982. These communities will be completed by the end of 1982, and there will be many more communities to come. As well for 1982, SPC is still evaluating the feasibility of including Roche Percee and North Portal and acreages in the Pike Lake and Holbein areas as part of the program.

SPC will, with the help of local organizations or service clubs, conduct a sign-up campaign in each of these communities in an effort to attempt to get 65 per cent of the customers to accept service as part of the basis for providing service. Each customer applying during this period will pay a \$200 deposit which will be refunded if the gas is used within two years.

The hon. members opposite, Mr. Speaker, wish to have me speak about the farm program. Let me now turn to the farm program. This program will provide for the construction of plastic pipeline systems to farms which are generally located near existing or future pipelines. While SPC will not be assuming the total cost of construction, its share will be substantially increased compared to existing policies. As a result, a farmer's share will be reduced substantially and natural gas will become an attractive alternative - a new option to many farmers.

In keeping with the history of this province, the program will encourage farmers to organize on their own into co-operative area groupings. By getting together, many elements of pipeline systems can be shared in order to reduce construction costs, and in turn, farmers' costs. To further reduce construction costs farmers will have the option to do some of the work themselves under a self-help program. Under our new policy, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation will assume the first \$1,000 of construction costs and share the balance of the costs on a 50-50 basis with the farmers. SPC's total share under this program will be up to a maximum of \$8,000.

Mr. Speaker, this farm program will bring natural gas to thousands and thousands of farmers across Saskatchewan who want gas and are not now served by gas. SPC will serve as many farmers as possible this year. There are construction and weather and planning limitations, but we will nevertheless do the very best we can to serve as many farmers as possible who wish to take service.

In general, priority will be given to those projects along the pipeline systems being installed this year to serve the new communities, and I should explain that this being done because it is easier to make the necessary taps and connections while these lines are not in operation.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that this natural gas extension program will have benefits additional to the obvious ones and extended access to natural gas. Products used and new heating installations will provide new business opportunities for Saskatchewan businesses. Four to five hundred person-years of new work will be

created by the pipeline installations alone, and another 500 will be created within service industries in a given year, making this one of the largest single job creation projects in this province.

As I mentioned earlier, expanded supply options cannot constitute the whole of a comprehensive rural energy policy. Conservation is also a must. In this regard the Government of Saskatchewan will implement two significant developments.

First, we will make available to energy users in Saskatchewan a new system of energy use evaluations. Energy advisers, approximately 30 in number, will be based in major SPC offices all across this province. The cost of this program, shared by the Saskatchewan Power Corporation and the Department of Mineral Resources, will be approximately \$750,000 in the first year. Through this program, energy users will be able to get comprehensive energy use and energy conservation reviews and advice before undertaking conversion or conservation measures.

Second, we will make available a new \$3,000 interest-free residential loan, and a new \$10,000 interest-free loan to small rural businesses, community halls, recreational facilities, schools, hospitals, and the like, under the Warm Up Saskatchewan program. These loans will be available to customers in communities and areas not served by natural gas who undertake measures to reduce energy use for heating, as recommended in the energy reviews mentioned earlier. Total cost of this extension to the Warm Up Saskatchewan program will be \$75 million over five years. I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that this complex of rural energy programs will establish Saskatchewan as a world leader in rural energy programs. I fully expect to see other utilities and other governments in this country following in our footsteps as the success of our approach becomes evident.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Many of you, Mr. Speaker, will remember the massive rural electrification program of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. One of the success stories of that era was the self-help crews of farmers that banded together to help build power lines to serve their farmsteads. Mr. Speaker, it is our intention, as is evident from this program, to build our program now with respect to natural gas extension on the strengths of those things that we know we have done well and can do well. One of those strengths is the ability of Saskatchewan people to work together for the common good. As I have indicated, we intend to emphasize co-operation and self-help in our gas extension program, and I'm pleased to note that the Department of Co-operation will be helping in assisting in this regard. The power corporation was formed, Mr. Speaker, to serve the needs of the citizens of this province and it has done that well. One recalls with pride, as I mentioned, the electrification of the province and the co-operation of all of the people of the province, farmers, SPC workers, businessmen and others to accomplish this massive project. It was a proud time for Saskatchewan when the first gas flames were lit at ceremonies in 380 communities in the '50s, '60s and early '70s. We intend to have another 150 such flame-lighting ceremonies in the future. We intend to continue to give people in Saskatchewan those opportunities - opportunities to be proud of their respective communities, to contribute to their development, and to ensure their future by securing a safe and efficient energy supply in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Saskatchewan is proud to boast the most widespread gas network in all of Canada. We are a large province with a large area and we are, as a people, very, very widely dispersed and diversified. Therefore, it is no mean feat to put our gas system into place. It has been no mean feat to have it reach where it has reached now and we will continue to go on from that. Skeptics said it couldn't be done when we started but we went ahead and did it, and we are prepared to do more.

Let me add one more point, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, we have made every effort to keep the cost of service to new customers low. But we also recognize that there will be costs involved for conversions when customers must replace and convert their existing heating equipment. I am please to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Walter Smishek, minister in charge of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, has informed me that there will be financial assistance available to potential customers in order to make these conversions. Home-owners replacing or converting their heating equipment are eligible for loans and, in some cases, grants through the various home improvement and rehabilitation and other programs offered by the housing corporation, as well as through our other government departments.

Mr. Speaker, that indicates a very, very aggressive and new approach with respect to rural energy - one that we can be definitely proud of. Mr. Speaker, this budget contains so much and that is just one indication of one part of this budget: so much for people, help and assistance and protection for people, support for people in their search for independence in their work life, in their community life and in their home life.

Our way of life, Mr. Speaker, is also enhanced through our educational system. I would like, as minister responsible for the Departments of Education and Continuing Education, to go on from discussing the rural heating programs to talk about our education system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Our great-grandparents, rural people mostly, built schools and began educating their children long before there was a provincial government because they saw education as an investment in the future. The pioneer's dreams for the future of this province have become a reality. The graduates of those small, rural schools have helped and made Saskatchewan develop and prosper into the kind of province we have today. Our schools formed a basis for what has today become one of the best (in fact, I am confident the very best) educational system in all of Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — The future of our province and our rural communities is, as I have already said, as important today as it was to our pioneers. We have a strong, decentralized school system which gives local citizens decision-making powers for their own schools. The Government of Saskatchewan supports this decentralized system with increased grants and in the rural school divisions with grants which recognize the unique character of rural schools.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, foundation grants to schools will increase by 15 per cent per student overall to a total of nearly \$300 million. Capital grants alone will increase by 25 per cent. Mr. Speaker, I want you to take particular note of the application of this budget with respect to rural schools. Operating grants to rural school divisions will total almost \$170 million for 1982-83.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Speaker, that is an average increase of 17.3 per cent over 1981-82. This is an average per pupil grant of \$1,762. Mr. Speaker, that is a proud accomplishment with respect to rural schools in support for our rural educational system. Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our rural schools can offer the same opportunities and programs as are offered within our urban schools, many rural school systems will receive even greater increases in recognition of their particular and special needs. Declining enrolments have been a major factor in the overall financial planning for rural school divisions in this province. In recognition of this, we are providing \$7.7 million in funds for school divisions with declining enrolments, an increase of 24 per cent in overall grant amounts compared to last year, to compensate for higher costs per pupil and to maintain program quality. Extra support for small schools with fewer than 20 students per grade will triple in 1983-83 to \$5.5 million. Last year, this factor applied only to pupils in grades 10 to 12. In 1982, I am pleased to announce that this additional funding will be extended so as to cover not only classrooms within the grades 10 to 12 category, but also the classrooms within the grades 7 to 9 category.

Small rural high schools with fewer than 15 students per grade in division 4 will qualify for even higher additional grant support this year under this program. Rural school divisions with sparse populations will also be provided with special grants totalling \$5.9 million. Sparse population is also recognized within the transportation grant which will increase by an average of 14 per cent and will cover the full cost of transportation within our rural school system.

Capital grants are being increased by more than 25 per cent in 1982. For many rural communities these grants will mean the replacement of older cottage-type schools and so on and the addition of modern gymnasias, industrial arts facilities, dental clinics and the like. This is an investment, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that children in today's small rural schools have the access to quality education that they deserve and that is equal to their urban counterparts.

Adequate funding is only one part of the answer, however. We must address other concerns and provide for other service needs if our rural way of life is to flourish.

In 1981 we began a dialogue with rural educators and parents and trustees with the publication of our major discussion paper entitled "Rural Education: Options for the 1980s." And that dialogue is continuing. We are talking with people in rural communities about their educational needs and their concerns. And we're acting on those needs and concerns.

A full-time rural education co-ordinator has been appointed to provide ongoing support for rural education initiatives. A team of program implementers operating from regional offices of the Department of Education has been established to mobilize local resources, help smaller school divisions start up new programs and to co-ordinate in-service training for teachers in rural areas and curriculum implementation.

The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School is another important resource for our rural schools. Although the school has been operating for nearly 60 years, the services it provides to rural students today are as modern and as sophisticated as any in the country. The school experienced a 47 per cent increase in

enrolment during the past year and new staff and funding will be provided in 1982 so that it may serve rural Saskatchewan even better in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I speak with some pride about a new shared-services plan which will be implemented in 26 rural school divisions this fall to provide local speech therapy and school psychologist services for some 23,000 rural students.

More than \$225,000 in special grants this year will enable neighboring school divisions in rural areas to pool their resources and share the services of these speech therapists and school psychologists - an innovative approach, Mr. Speaker, that puts the assessment of needs and the control of services in the hands of the local schools and the local people and the local administration. The shared-services plan is, I am pleased to say, meeting with enthusiastic response from rural people because it depends upon the co-operative spirit for which Saskatchewan people have become so well-known. Opportunities being provided, once again, as indicated by this, for rural people here in Saskatchewan. Because of the response we have had to the shared services program with the recent signing of three sets of agreements in the last three week, I am pleased to announce that the shared services plan will now be expanded to include all rural school divisions which are interested in providing services in accordance with the principles and criteria covering the plan.

Mr. Speaker, educational opportunities in Saskatchewan, as important as they are at the elementary and secondary levels, extend beyond elementary and secondary education into the whole community through our excellent post-secondary education system.

First, Mr. Speaker, in talking about the post-secondary education system and the adult and continuing education system, let me confirm to this House the importance that we as a government place upon our universities. To better appreciate our commitment to our universities, one has only to examine in detail the budget tabled last week by the Minister of Finance. Let's examine the highlights of that budget as they relate to university funding.

First, universities will get a 17 per cent increase in operating grants for 1982-83 - a total of \$117.9 million. That's one of the highest increases in Canada. I note that this level of financial commitment to our universities is not being followed in other parts of Canada where there are Tory governments in place. I note that the provincial Tories here (the hon. member for Indian Head-Wolseley, for instance) speak very warmly of the Reaganomics approach to management of the economy and social programs. Well, we know where that comes from, Mr. Speaker. It comes from a common view of government that is held by the Conservative politicians all across this country. Let me mention Conservative Ontario, for instance, where we have seen an indication that after severe cutbacks within the university system during the last three and four years they intend to continue those cutbacks on into the future. They have confirmed that in writing.

Mr. Speaker, one only need to look at the Lyon government in Manitoba and its record with respect to university funding to once again show that Reaganomics is the policy of the Conservative Party. It is the policy confirmed by the hon. member for Indian Head-Wolseley. It is the policy that is adopted by Conservative governments across this country. Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, to our approach. In Saskatchewan over the last two years university operating funds have increased by more than 30 per cent. Our expenditures for university education over the last 10 years and over recent years is a

great record. It's a record that puts us at the forefront of the nation in terms of supporting our universities.

Mr. Speaker, the 1982-83 increase in grants of 17 per cent is even more significant if you examine the total increase in provincial funds being made available for university education. I will be indicating later that the federal government is in the course of cutting back \$33 million from its transfer payments to support health and post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. In addition to the \$17.9 million additional funds that we have put into the university sector directly through the growth in grants, we have also had to replace those funds. Our provincial budget, therefore, Mr. Speaker, picks up this federal shortfall as well.

Our support for universities is even made more remarkable when one examines our record for support for capital construction. This government will provide a total of \$9.4 million to Saskatchewan universities this year in capital grants. This funding consists of \$6.65 million in regular capital funding - a 66 per cent increase over the \$4 million provided last year. It also includes more than \$2.7 million from the heritage fund to complete projects under way and to begin work on the new geological sciences building.

Since 1978, Mr. Speaker, the government's capital grants to the universities have been provided both by regular grants and by special grants from the heritage fund. From 1978 to 1981, the heritage fund, made up of revenues derived from resources and used for special projects at the university, has provided more than \$38 million toward new construction projects at the universities.

The provincial government is committed to continue the many major building projects under way at our universities and to meet other capital needs as well. Between 1969 and 1981, the government provided the universities with more than \$138 million for capital construction and renovations, and this record is being continued with these expenditures this year.

Included in the regular portion of the capital grants to universities this year, Mr. Speaker, are such things as \$775,000 for the purchase of McLean Hall at the University of Saskatchewan, \$295,000 for construction of a campus "steam loop" at the University of Regina, \$535,000 for renovations at both universities to improve access to facilities for disabled people, and \$1.25 million as a special one-time grant for the purchase by both universities of additional library materials and teaching resources.

In addition to the many capital projects under way, the Saskatchewan Universities Commission is currently prioritizing further capital requests for university building and renovation projects, which will total more than \$250 million. University capital construction needs are always in the forefront and Saskatchewan has met them well. It now has two excellent campuses of which we can be tremendously proud, with ongoing building projects and equipment purchases continuing to provide the highest quality support possible by our many university programs.

Mr. Speaker, our support for universities is also greatly enhanced by our direct support to students. To maintain our position as one of Canada's fastest growing economies, it is essential that our young people be prepared to contribute to our future. Since 1949, Saskatchewan has led the way in Canada with student assistance programs, now including the Saskatchewan Student Loans Plan, the Saskatchewan Student Bursary

Plan and the graduate scholarship program. We will increase financial assistance for students this year by more than 24 per cent, Mr. Speaker, to a total of \$10.5 million.

The bursary program provides non-repayable funds to students in amounts matching their federal student loans. The Saskatchewan Student Bursary Plan will increase by 17 per cent this year to provide for the growing costs facing students. The Saskatchewan government has, for some time, been urging the federal government to increase its expenditures for student assistance through the introduction of a national federal-provincial student assistance program with a federal bursary component as well as the provincial bursary component. But I regret to say, Mr. Speaker, that negotiations with the federal government have met with little success.

The Government of Saskatchewan will introduce a new supplemental assistance program, I'm pleased to say, to provide extra funds to students whose needs exceed the maximum amounts available now to them under the existing federal loan and matching provincial bursary program. We are doing this because the federal government has failed to move on the co-operative joint program that has now been under discussion for two years. Our program will not only increase the bursary level for students who are in the greatest need, but will, if the federal government takes no action, also be prepared to provide an increased loan maximum to our students.

In addition to these initiatives, Mr. Speaker, our budget provides for an increase of 42 per cent in financial assistance for graduate students. New scholarship levels have been set to better reflect the varying needs of graduate students. Masters non-thesis students will be eligible for \$4,560 scholarships, masters thesis students will be eligible for \$6,840 scholarships, and doctoral students will be eligible for \$9,120 scholarships. This is a very, very substantial change, Mr. Speaker, and one I know will please the university community.

With the increased support for university financing and student assistance, we will not only guarantee increased opportunities for students but we will also continue to decrease the percentage that tuition makes up toward the total costs of university education. Current tuition fees constitute just over 10 per cent of the universities' operating costs, down from 11.4 per cent in 1976 and far below the mid-1960s level, which the member for Thunder Creek will recall, when tuition fees paid for approximately 27 per cent of total operating costs.

This government takes a much different view from that of the old right-wing free enterprise parties that sit opposite and have sat opposite. The Saskatchewan government and Saskatchewan universities are committed to a policy of keeping tuition fees down to a low percentage of university operating costs. This is an important time when universities across Canada are being forced to use tuition fees, as a result of policies by many Tory governments, to pay an increasing percentage of their university operating costs - one only need look, for example, at the pseudo-Tory government in British Columbia where the university of British Columbia has been forced to announce a tuition increase of more than 30 per cent this year. That is something that could not happen in this province because of the approach we take with respect to the funding of universities and the support that we provide and give to our universities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on and talk about other parts of our education system. One of the great success stories in Saskatchewan is our community college system which has helped promote the economic and social development of Saskatchewan. Last year our community colleges recorded enrolment of 92,705 participants.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — These colleges bring volunteers, educators, and students together to provide adult programming to the community so that people in communities throughout Saskatchewan can participate in a variety of locally identified and locally offered programs which are designed to ensure that continuing education is a reality and that independent learning is a goal that can be fulfilled by people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, to further provide for this successful program we will increase basic grants to community colleges by 14 per cent in this budget year, to a total of more than \$6.8 million. This basic grant will not only provide for administrative support to colleges, but, as well, provide programs to our smaller communities. Types of programs that will be offered include recreation, arts, crafts, basic education, skill training, technical and vocational training, and university courses.

The unique aspect of our community college system is the philosophic basis upon which it was established. We have not built large buildings for our colleges. Our system makes the best use of existing facilities in our rural communities in order to maintain flexibility. Its programs are defined by local community committees volunteering their time in order to serve their rural village, town, or city residents.

Mr. Speaker, our colleges are more than just delivery agents of educational programs. More and more they are becoming agents of local community development . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Perhaps we can have a short break from the speech for the member opposite and then I can return, Mr. Speaker. I would be very interested in hearing what the member for Thunder Creek has to say.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! I think it's clear the member for Thunder Creek wants a permanent break; the Minister of Education is talking about a temporary break.

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Speaker, our colleges are more than just a delivery agent of educational programs. More and more they are becoming agents of local community development. They bring together and foster both economic and social development for people around our province - developments which otherwise might never occur. The recent Saskatchewan Committee on Rural Area Development meetings held around the province are a prime example of the way our colleges act as social catalysts enriching the fibre of this most important part of Saskatchewan society. New initiatives to enhance the quality of life in rural Saskatchewan through our community colleges have been provided in the 1982-83 budget, Mr. Speaker, and I wish to take a moment to mention a few of these.

I am pleased to announce that we will be expanding the emergency medical technician program throughout rural and urban Saskatchewan. We plan to deliver nine emergency medical technician programs and nine emergency medical technician refresher programs, available not only in Regina and Saskatoon, but to show our commitment to rural Saskatchewan and our commitment to decentralization, available in such places as Melfort, Wadena, Humboldt, Esterhazy, Shaunavon, Weyburn and Estevan, to name but a few.

Our philosophy of bringing services to people in their own communities illustrates our commitment with respect to the unique nature of Saskatchewan society.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, our government also plans to provide in-service training to home care boards and staff, special-care staff and day care workers throughout the province under our college system.

And third, we are in the process of designing more programs for our colleges, in areas such as improvement of lifestyle and pre-retirement planning, to name but a few.

Mr. Speaker, these programs will cost in excess of an additional quarter of a million dollars, and reinforce our belief that our citizens have the right to lifelong learning, the right to enhance their quality of living.

And the colleges will provide for even more development in rural areas in the future. Here I am speaking of the development of more accessibility to educational opportunities, more and better programs being offered, more technical, vocational and university credit courses offered, and as a result, more opportunity for rural people to learn.

In co-operation with our school boards and our technical institutes, the community colleges will become more involved in technical training in order to provide our residents with opportunities for the jobs that will help them to benefit directly from Saskatchewan's tremendous economic growth in the 1980s and beyond. Through our community colleges, Mr. Speaker, we will be offering more than 7,000 classes this year, many of them providing greater employment opportunities for people. This will mean our colleges will be delivering such programs as production line welding in Swift Current through the Cypress Hills Community College, apprenticeship training for industrial mechanics at Melville through the Parkland Community College, motor mechanics at Melfort through the Cumberland Community College, business education at Kindersley through the Prairie West Community College. Our increased appropriations for the cost-shared programs and for the basic flat grant, Mr. Speaker, would mean the total allocation to colleges in 1982 will be \$18 million, a 27.3 per cent increase over 1981-82.

I believe our community college system illustrates a clear understanding of the way of life in Saskatchewan. Through our colleges we bring services to people where they live. Our residents are able, through their own initiative, to define their educational needs, and we have a framework to provide the services which meet those community needs. We have a system which provides for greater equality of opportunities, which enhances quality of life, and which increases opportunities to learn those skills necessary to obtain jobs in a rapidly expanding economy.

Mr. Speaker, this college system has the pioneer spirit characterized by our forefathers in the development of this province. It provides for self-initiative and respects the viability of our rich rural lifestyles. It is a system that is built on participation and co-operation. Surely our way is the proven successful Saskatchewan way - the one pioneered by this government and so strongly opposed by the members opposite.

Of course our system does not end with our community college system. Educational opportunities for our residents can also be achieved through technical institutes, universities and the like. I previously mentioned that our healthy economy has resulted in and will continue to provide greater opportunities for jobs for residents, and in order to create greater opportunities for our people, we must increase our training capacity.

In recent years we have announced major new initiatives to provide improved training opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

First, we have developed an Outreach program whereby skilled training programs, occupationally related, have been decentralized, and we have begun to make more and better use of the excellent training facilities available to us in our comprehensive schools. Our government will continue this approach. It has provided a total of over \$1.2 million for Outreach this year, an increase of more than 60 per cent compared to 1981-82.

Secondly, we have introduced new delivery approaches in our technical institutes in order to make our programs more accessible and flexible. In the last five years participation rates in our technical institutes have increased 12.3 per cent in full-time programs, 73.3 per cent in apprenticeship and specialized programs, and 32.2 per cent in extension courses offered to Saskatchewan residents.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we are indeed proud of the initiatives being undertaken in our capital program for our institutes. Within the last three years we began the process of expanding the Saskatchewan Technical Institute in Moose Jaw at a cost of \$6.1 million, and, as well, announced the construction of a new technical institute in Prince Albert at a total cost of more than \$15 million. These recent developments will increase our on-site training spaces by more than 600, Mr. Speaker. We will be continuing our expansion at STL, I am pleased to say. A further, 4,400 square metres at a cost of \$5.1 million will be constructed, resulting in an additional 250 training spaces - training in those fields experiencing the most pressing labor demands today. In addition, the Government of Saskatchewan will provide an additional amount of approximately \$5 million in La Ronge to provide new training facilities for the North.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, let us look at the record in this area. We have, in the last five years, seen enrolments in institutes increase by 6,441 students, and we now have on the drawing board capital expenditure plans in excess of \$31 million in order to provide new and additional training opportunities for a further 1,200 students. I believe the record is one to be envied.

Let it be known that our government puts its priorities with the people, not simply on cold economics and profits. We have made opportunities for education and for jobs the number one priority for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, our concern for training has not been reserved only for the privileged and the rich in our society. Creating opportunities for all people to grow and enrich their lives is one of the major roles that education plays in this province. This government has planned for and has provided opportunities for those who suffer from the cycle of poverty, failure, alienation and underachievement. One of the groups that has experienced a high degree of poverty has been our native people.

The hon. member should listen very carefully to this kind of thing because if he listened carefully, I am sure he would find that he would want to support this budget not oppose this budget as he has been doing to date. The things I'm talking about - schools, universities, community colleges and programs for our native people - the hon. member would do well to consider supporting if he hopes to have any political future in this province.

In that regard, we are providing funding for the non-status Indian and Metis program at

a total of \$4.8 million this year - a 21.4 per cent increase over 1981-82. We have also reorganized the delivery of the non-status Indian and Metis program whereby native people can be directly involved in the identification of training needs and determining the programs required. We have established area committees with native and community college representatives - a move that I believe will greatly improve the effectiveness of the NSIM program.

Mr. Speaker, a year and one-half ago I announced to this House the establishment, with provincial government support, of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, a centre of research and education serving the Metis and non-status Indian people of this province. In support of this initiative, Mr. Speaker, we are this year providing the Gabriel Dumont Institute with an additional \$130,000 to develop community educational programs. This new program, along with the increase in base funding will provide the institute with a total grant of \$881,000, more than a 57 per cent increase over last year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Our programs for native people do not end there, Mr. Speaker. They go on into support for the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College with funding of \$350,000 and a further commitment of providing an additional \$1 million to the college over the next five years for research and development and so on.

Mr. Speaker, our approach to accessibility to educational opportunities is extremely important. Our record is a proud one with respect to the opportunities that we have provided to our native people. Mr. Speaker, we are determined to make these programs work. They will provide real, not imagined, equal opportunity for the people involved. I take a great deal of pride in our achievements to date and take very seriously our responsibility and my government's responsibility to provide increased support to enhance greater opportunities for all people in the future.

Mr. Speaker, before closing I want to turn to a subject that goes back to the question of the universities and colleges in our country and in our province. Mr. Speaker, our universities and our colleges have been under attack in this province and in this country on the part of a variety of politicians for some time. I speak in particular, Mr. Speaker, about the attacks that have been mounted by federal ministers in the federal Liberal government in Ottawa, as well as by certain Conservative politicians outside.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order. I want to assure the Minister of Education that relief is in sight. I notice the Attorney General has been provoking the opposition all afternoon and he now has some work that he can do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: — Perhaps as a result of that, the House can come back to order and we could listen to the Minister of Education conclude his remarks.

HON. MR. McARTHUR: — Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate your help. I was having a great deal of difficulty following the debate that was going on. I was interested in it and I look forward to having a chance to hear it on some occasion.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, I want to turn to the question that has been very much on the minds of people concerned and interested in the future of our universities in this country - the unilateral changes that are being proposed by the federal government,

the Government of Canada, with respect to future financial support for our universities. Mr. Speaker, the federal government and the politicians involved clearly have in mind cutting back (and they have already done so) the financial support that is available to our universities. This is based very clearly on the philosophy of Reaganomics, the philosophy of Reaganomics that has been adopted by the members opposite, that has been promoted in the Parliament of Canada by the federal members of parliament representing the Conservative Party, and now is being supported and advanced by the Liberal Party as well.

The right-wing parties in this country, Mr. Speaker, have joined together to mount an ever-growing attack upon the social institutions and the social programs that are offered in this country. The hon. members laugh. I ask them simply to look at the statements that are made by their finance critic and by any number of Conservative politicians representing this country and this province in Ottawa. Look at the statements that are made with regard to economic policies, high interest rates. Look at the statements that are made with respect to social programs. What did Mr. Crombie say? Mr. Crombie, who is on the progressive side of that member's party, so they say - what did he say when Ronald Reagan was elected? He said, "Hallelujah." This is showing you that politically you can sell this kind of stuff. Therefore, the Conservative Party itself will begin to adopt and follow these programs. Mr. Speaker, the cutbacks that the federal government is proposing with respect to post-secondary education and health is small potatoes compared to anything the Conservatives would do if you believe the statements of their federal members with respect to their approach to social programs. The fact of the matter is that the attack that is being mounted on our universities and colleges today in Canada, while it is being directly mounted by the federal Liberal government, has its roots in the attacks on social programs and social spending that has been undertaken by members of the Conservative Party as well as the Liberal Party in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that the federal government has in mind two things. I think this is clear. They intend to spend less for our social programs and they also intend to have greater control over what is done.

The federal government has made it clear that it plans to change the terms and conditions for funding higher education under the so-called EPF (established program of financing) arrangements. The results of these changes will be very, very serious. They will mean that overall spending from the federal government will be reduced and, as a result of that, without question, generally across the country so will spending that's available for the university and college sector. The federal government proposes to reduce direct payments to post-secondary education and health care in Saskatchewan over the next five years in the amount of \$211 million. In 1982-83, the amount of the reduction will be \$32 million. These are the reductions that we know of at this stage of the debate. This is a serious abdication of federal responsibilities, Mr. Speaker.

An allegation often made by the federal political spokesmen is that their transfer payments are, as they say, not being fully used for health and educational purposes. I have some difficulty judging that allegation as it applies to other provinces, although I'm skeptical about it. I do know that it is nonsense as it applies to Saskatchewan. I note with interest the Prime Minister's mathematics in describing post-secondary education funding here in Saskatchewan. He said that five years ago Ottawa paid 46 per cent of higher education costs and the provincial government paid 41 per cent. He said that today Ottawa pays 62 per cent and Saskatchewan 23 per cent.

Let us look at the real facts. A review of the 1983 budget shows that the provincial government will spend approximately \$700 million for health care and \$200 million for higher education - a total of \$900 million. The EPF agreements provide for financial transfers to the provinces to assist the provinces in underwriting the costs of those programs. There is no distinction within the EPF payments between health and post-secondary education. They are block grants made in support of those two programs. The federal government, if one looks at the estimates (those figures are taken from the federal figures provided to us), will this year through EPF make payments to the Government of Saskatchewan of an estimated \$298 million. Mr. Speaker, my mathematics would indicate to me that the federal government, through its EPF payments, will therefore be providing about 33 per cent of the combined spending for health and post-secondary education here in Saskatchewan in the coming year. That is a drop from earlier years.

Some will note from speeches that I've made earlier that in past years that figure was somewhat higher. The federal contribution is dropping substantially and will drop substantially because of their cutbacks and because of our rapidly increasing spending in the health and post-secondary education areas. The fact of the matter is that if they go through with their plans their contributions will drop well below 30 per cent.

The Prime Minister's claim that somehow his contribution is so much higher for education can only mean that his contribution is so much lower for health because this is only one bundle of money. Therefore, his figures clearly are ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, the second objective of the federal plan is to target funding to specific programs. The federal government seems preoccupied with questioning the relevance of university teaching and research and its relationship to labor market needs and manpower needs today. Therefore, they want to get greater control over the use of those funds and the direction over the programs that are offered.

An inevitable result of federal control is that the internal university budgeting, and with it decision making about research and scholarship and teaching, will be subjected to direct federal influence. Our universities would be transformed into occupational training centres in the narrowest sense of the word. Freedom and independence would be sacrificed to the whims of federal bureaucrats and federal politicians.

Mr. Speaker, again, they wish to spend less and control more - something that I think is unacceptable with respect to the post-secondary education system. Furthermore, they continue to confirm that they still have plans (not certain plans but contingency plans) which may come about to introduce voucher systems.

Very simply, under this system, federal money would not go directly to universities and colleges. A student would obtain a voucher from the federal government which could be used to shop around for an education. Universities would be placed in the position of competing for students' voucher dollars. A variation of this theme, of course, would see the vouchers used for certain programs which are related to the federal government's ideas of manpower needs.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this House should recognize the disadvantages of this program for what they would be - another blow to the academic independence of our universities and colleges. What will happen to programs which attract small numbers of students? I think we can guess the federal government's answer to that one in the so-

called free market approach to education - those programs must go. And what will happen to the small universities and the federal and affiliated colleges, and so on? Well, they won't be able to compete in this free market economy in the universities and colleges system, and they too will die. The federal government says, "Too bad."

The strong - not necessarily the best - would get stronger and the weak would wither and die. It is also likely that student program choices would be limited by these distortions. Institutions would no doubt promote higher profile programs to attract student buyers, and would eliminate or not make well-known the opportunities of other excellent programs which might not have the same attraction. Vouchers could also be used in quota amounts, thereby making them a mechanism for directing and influencing according to federal objectives what the universities teach and do not teach.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government clearly wishes to spend less and control more, in keeping with its notions of Reaganomics and competitive federalism and direct federal control over the affairs of this country. We know the federal plan of action, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure you that this government, and I as minister, will not stand by and let our excellent public education system be destroyed by these federal government actions.

Let us have no doubt that if the federal government begins to deal directly with the institutions, employers and individual students, then not only will our public education system be undermined, but basic educational principles, which play such an important part in our system, will be lost. Self-governance and decision making would be effectively removed in the sense that we have known it, not just from provincial jurisdiction, but also from the universities and the colleges themselves.

Provincial responsibility for education is clear cut. It is spelled out in the constitution and I do not take that responsibility lightly. We will continue to face the federal government and advance the causes of our universities and colleges, and our university students and faculties, in order to try to ensure that the costly kinds of moves, the dangerous kinds of moves, which they are threatening do not come about.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying that I believe Saskatchewan people can be very proud of their work over the years in building our educational systems in this country. The roots of our systems have been based on the co-operative spirit of working together, a desire to provide for a greater equality of opportunity, and a drive for excellence. Our economic future will be assured if we protect that system, and if we build and extend that system, and therefore provide for well-trained, well-educated people for the future.

We have developed, here in Saskatchewan, a Saskatchewan option - a public educational system which suits the Saskatchewan way of life. Thanks to our economic and social development policies, the forward looking policies of our party, which have given Saskatchewan people control over their own destiny, we have now in Saskatchewan an educational system which is second to none. We on this side of the House would keep it that way, and further improve it. The policies and programs, and the very, very substantial increased spending which has been announced in association with this budget is part of keeping that promise - keeping the promise to our people, for our people, and of our people.

Mr. Speaker, in the future we will keep that promise to the people of Saskatchewan as well. I look forward to the future, and I am optimistic about the great strides we will

make to further ensure our quality of life and improvements in our quality and our way of life. Our initiatives in education and in our rural energy programs, together with the other budget initiatives introduced by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, and further laid out by other colleagues in the cabinet, reflects our commitment to Saskatchewan, to its people and to its future.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly and strongly support this budget and I reject emphatically the rejection of the budget by the hon. members opposite. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this last budget debate of this legislature. I sat with amusement, as did many members on this side of the House and perhaps on that side of the House, as the Minister of Finance delivered his little dissertation last Thursday. Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help but be reminded of some of the comments that have come from other political parties as they concerned the opposition in the Saskatchewan legislature. I couldn't help but be reminded of a comment by the Attorney General, who said that the members on this side of the House were the worst opposition that he had seen in 30 years. I can recall a comment by . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I was going to say somebody but I suppose Mr. Nobody. He goes by the name of Ralph Goodale, who was elected leader of an obscure party many months ago. And Mr. Goodale said at the outset that one of the reasons why the Liberal Party must come back is because of that inept, incompetent opposition in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I'd briefly just like to run over a few items that that incompetent, outmoded poor opposition has been proposing since 1978. I'll start with the smaller ones. First, we had the gall to propose something known as tax-free gas in tandem trucks for farmers. Now, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that everybody knows that farmers are having to drive their trucks a little farther than what they used to and, consequently, the economics dictate that a little bigger load is going to have to be taken. Consequently, two or three times a session colleagues on this side of the House have asked the Minister of Agriculture, "What about the use of tax-free purple gas in tandem trucks?"

Mr. Speaker, if you ever wanted to have the Minister of Agriculture absolutely start to turn red from the neck up, it was to start talking about multi-axle vehicles to be used by farms. So, as you would ask that question several times in a session, the minister would get up; you could see the blood literally flowing up; you could see the adrenaline flowing and he would answer in the highly predictable fashion. He would say, "The use of tax-free purple gas in tandem trucks . . . This government doesn't support inland terminals; this government doesn't support the destruction of municipal roads; this government is not going to support the destruction of our rural elevator system." And he would rant and go on and on. Now, that was an answer. That was an answer to the use of tax-free gas in tandem trucks. This has gone on at least three or four times a session and the process was repeated.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help but notice as the Minister of Finance was reaching that particular page on the budget, the Minister of Agriculture was having a little bit of difficulty keeping his head above his desk. He was slumping down and down and down. But, heavens, I commend you for seeing the political realities. I don't suggest for one moment that your attitude has changed. But none the less, as has been fully pointed out in another medium, when it comes time to putting food on the table, nobody can turn

his philosophy around quicker than a socialist.

Mr. Speaker, another thing we have proposed in this Assembly many times is mortgage assistance - not only to home-owners, but interest rate subsidies, help to small businessmen, help to farmers. We have always received in return the answer, "We are not going to put more money in the coffers of the Royal Bank or the Toronto Dominion or the Bank of Commerce. Heavens, no. We can't do anything. It is all Ottawa's fault." Generally - in fact, I won't say generally - always the answer is, "We can't do anything about interest rates. The opposition on that side of the House knows it can't do anything; it couldn't do anything better. When the opposition proposes help to the average person - the average farmer, the average businessman and the home-owner - the opposition is proposing to put more money into the profits of the banking institutions." I may have done a little paraphrasing there, but if that sounds like the Attorney General, that's who it was.

AN HON. MEMBER: — It wasn't merely coincidence.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Speaker, is it just a bit of coincidence that when this government is fighting for its very survival and doing its sophisticated polling, all of a sudden it sees the light? Well, they didn't see much of the light, because it's a big \$20 million for the average guy. They really are big time spenders. You are spending money through your crown corporation medium and your government medium to tell us how well-off we are in this province, how much money will be coming in - the \$5 billion oil agreement. But at this time, in these economic times that are probably the worst since the '30s, you have all of \$20 million out of a budget of \$2.7 billion. This at a time when the average guy needs it worse than he has ever needed it at any time since World War II.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's another one which the incompetent, decrepit, worst opposition in 30 years has been talking about - a public utilities review commission. When that one was proposed in response to the outrageous price hikes of SPC, SaskTel and SGI, the government on the other side said, "That's crazy. We don't need anything like that. You already have that - you have a crown corporation committee." I won't go into that one; everybody in this Assembly knows how ridiculous that one is. Of course, Alberta does need it, because all of the utilities are privately owned over there. But over here, we're the good guys; we're on the side of God and motherhood, we don't need any scrutiny.

Mr. Speaker, when that public utility review committee, or its equivalent as such, was announced in the legislature the other day, I don't know how you people could keep a straight face. If there is anything that this province needs right now, it is exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, these crown corporations have continued on an unbridled, unaccountable basis for too long. I, for one, hope I get the opportunity to go before that Culliton commission and ask for an investigation of what went on down in Coronach. I want somebody from SPC to tell me who made that blooper to build a power plant down in an area where the coal doesn't produce enough heat to generate electricity. Everybody knows that you have hauled in more fuel oil than you have coal this year to Coronach. Coronach has been one of the biggest bloopers in power history. What do you have in down there - \$500 million or \$600 million? And you are not even getting 5 per cent of your total power requirements out of Coronach. Who is accountable? Who made that decision? Who made the blooper? Who was it? How would we know? We are only members of the Assembly.

You know, you can pose a question in the crown corporations committee. Do you know the answer you will get from the minister? He will say that it's not in the public interest. Mr. Speaker, that is one of the most galling things in this province today. These crown corporations are accountable to no one, certainly not this Assembly. Hopefully, the minister is accountable in some fashion. I even doubt that in many respects. Something that is needed dramatically is to investigate all the crown corporation monopolies.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that this worst opposition in 30 years has been calling for is a power freeze. "Irresponsible," said the minister in charge of SPC. "Costs are rising dramatically. We have to put them up." He didn't justify the costs. He just announced that they were there. Mr. Speaker, I don't have to remind you of what this government did with its principles in that area in the last budget. They conveniently borrowed it.

Mr. Speaker, this worst opposition in 30 years was proposing another little item for rural Saskatchewan. We were proposing that the benefits of our natural resources be extended outside the city limits and that they go out into the country. We proposed extensive expansion of our rural gas distribution system out into the towns and villages and, where possible, onto the farms. But the minister in charge of SPC said. "That is the most outrageous, irresponsible expenditure I have ever heard of. It would cost \$1.5 billion to do that." We were flogged incessantly for daring to suggest that the people in rural Saskatchewan should be treated in a similar fashion to those in urban areas.

Mr. Speaker, at the time we proposed that program, we suggested the cost would be \$200 million. "Ridiculous," said the minister in charge of SPC. "It is \$1.5 billion." Well, Mr. Speaker, it came down in the budget last week and the cost allotted to it was not that \$1.5 billion. It was \$175 million. We said it would be \$200 million. The person who had access to the SPC estimates said \$175 million. I would say that is not bad. We won't argue about it. None the less, the proposal that came from that worst opposition in 30 years became an integral part of the budget of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the contents of that budget perhaps led to a bit of speculation about who wrote it. I suggest that the biggest input to that budget didn't come from the vast array of cabinet ministers or from the deputy ministers or from the budget bureau. I suggest to you that that budget was dictated solely and completely by the computer print-out sheets in the possession, way down in the basement, of the member for Biggar.

That budget had to be one of the most incredible flip-flops since World War II. That budget confirmed what everybody knew: this government was in deep, deep trouble, knew it, and was moving to correct the areas of neglect of the past 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, assuming that the Premier of the province follows through with the hype that he's put out and calls an election, the people of Saskatchewan are shortly going to have an opportunity to assess 10 years of NDP government. I suggest to you that the people of Saskatchewan are going to welcome that opportunity. They're going to welcome the opportunity to assess 10 years of NDP policies in rural Saskatchewan in agriculture.

Briefly, there's one bottom line that will assess the NDP performance in agriculture. When you came to power in 1971, we had 82,000 family farms. Today, 10 years later, we have 67,000. Mr. Speaker, 15,000 family farms disappeared under these great socialist programs that were going to rejuvenate rural Saskatchewan - things that

were going to make it so easy to transfer land from father to son, programs that were going to make it so simple to get young farmers on the land and functioning. Today we are reduced down to that bottom line: 15,000 fewer.

Mr. Speaker, with the level of help that this government has provided to the remaining 67,000, I suggest that another four years of this government would see a heck of a lot more of them going down the tubes because our farmers are facing the most difficult times that they have faced since the '30s. I don't have to tell you why. Where's the help from this government? Where's the leadership? They refuse to give help in providing reasonable interest rates, reasonable help for operating loans. No way. Where is it? It's not there.

I suggest to you that if and when you call an election, rural Saskatchewan is going to be in open rebellion against the New Democratic Party. I suggest to you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now, the yappy little member for Morse, who is already past tense, I think is going to be in a life and death struggle to stay in second place. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with him because his neighbors tell me (the ones I talked to while working his constituency last week) that he needs the job. He's such a lousy farmer that he needs a salary from here.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that agriculture's answer to New Democratic policies is going to be to virtually reduce you to a few urban labor seats, and I think rural Saskatchewan is going to be delighted to have an opportunity to pass judgment on you.

Mr. Speaker, a day or two ago in the legislature an interesting item was brought forward that I hope to have an opportunity to pursue - that is, if we don't go out onto the hustings - that that is an incident in Calgary, Alberta, with Intercontinental Packers, which is owned 45 per cent by the Government of Saskatchewan and was charged by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs with price-fixing - price-fixing against Alberta hog owners.

Mr. Speaker, I raised this item in the Assembly and was astounded to find the degree of casualness that the matter received from members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, their logic absolutely went by me. Why, if the packing industry is in the process of possibly stealing from Alberta hog producers, would these same packers not be doing the same here in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, I was shocked when the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Affairs refused to even look at the matter. He said it will ultimately come out in court in Alberta. Yes, it sure will - six years later, six to eight years later. Mr. Speaker, where there's smoke there's fire, and our hog producers have just had one blazes of a time. But how do we know it hasn't been extended? How do we know that it hasn't been extended into the cattle industry? Mr. Speaker, there's only one reason you don't want to open that can of worms in Saskatchewan - you're afraid of it, because Intercontinental Packers is 45 per cent owned by the NDP government and a strong possibility exists that Intercontinental may very well have been part of a conspiracy to defraud Saskatchewan livestock producers. And this government is afraid to look into it, probably because you know there's something to it.

You know, the record of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in these

prosecutions is reasonably good - considerably better, I might suggest, than is the record of the Attorney General's department. I understand they hit about eight out of ten - not bad.

Mr. Speaker, the refusal of this government to look into that is an indictment of government ownership in this sector. I suggest you are afraid to look into it and it's something I invite you to discuss on any potential election trail.

Mr. Speaker, the resource sector I don't have to go into. Your uranium philosophy lies in ashes for everyone to see. The uranium sector has come crashing down on top of you, and after the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars, when the rest of the world is backing away from uranium, you're still investing. The private sector is running away from it, but you have your policy on the line and you're ploughing more and more money into it. It's absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about the potash industry. And I say to many of those workers employed by PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan): are you ever lucky that we're on the eve of an election, because I suggest that there would be layoffs approaching 800 or 900 in that industry except that you're - what do they call it? - redeploying them into something else. And I suggest that, if there wasn't an election imminent, these people would be laid off right now. Again, hundreds of millions of dollars of somebody else's money was put into that needlessly and risks were taken that didn't have to be taken. Here was Central Canada Potash Corporation Ltd. willing to put up its own money to go into an expansion. You said, "No, we don't want you: we don't need you." So then you say, "All right, PCS are the good guys; we'll let them expand." Then the potash market goes to blazes. Whose money is on the line? Well, it's not yours - the last of the big spenders over there. They're spending somebody else's money. Again, this is an example of the NDP resource policy coming down on top of them. Let's talk about that out on the hustings, if and when you choose to go.

In the oil industry, about the only company that was left with any significant activity is Saskoil, and the bulk of that work is being done elsewhere. They're doing more work in Manitoba than they are on this side of the border, and they're doing a bad job at what they're doing.

Mr. Speaker, their resource policy is in shambles. The agriculture policy is in shambles. So they have brought up this sham of a crow debate hopefully to create the smoke screen that will perhaps put the 10 years of NDP government on the back burner so maybe they could creep through a 28-day campaign.

As we came back to this legislature, theoretically we were going to go into one of the great debates in legislative history - at least I read that in the paper; it must have been the *Leader-Post* - and that debate went pretty flat the first two or three days. Out of that debate was merely coming the confirmation that all we had here was a non-issue.

Mr. Speaker, I've found it very amusing the past couple of years the way the alliance between the federal Liberal Party and the provincial New Democratic Party here has developed. I think I've gone through the coercion or the conspiracy that went on during the constitution negotiations. But as the crowrate debate fell flat in this legislature, who did we have to bring into town to perhaps rev it up a little bit? The call went out to - who else? - your federal counterparts. So they bring in Pierre Elliott to make a speech. You know Pierre Elliott talked to about 100 paying Liberals and about 700 freebies were given to anybody who could take time to go and listen to him. And what did Pierre talk

about? Well, obviously he had the message that the crowrate debate just isn't going the way that his NDP friends had hoped: "Pierre, you have to help us. Pierre, you have to hype it up; you have to reaffirm that you're going to change the crowrate." So Pierre, talking to the 700 freebies, reaffirmed his support for altering the crowrate, and the people got up and they clapped and applauded, and it still didn't really get things going again. It still didn't really improve the quality or the zip in the debate in this legislature. Mr. Speaker, regrettably, the momentous debate became the non-debate.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to this Assembly that the people of Saskatchewan are going to judge you very harshly for your alliance with Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and I suggest to you that the people are going to judge you harshly for the role the New Democratic Party played in the resurrection of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. I suggest that people will judge you for being one of the reasons that there even is a crowrate debate or a crowrate issue, because as I have indicated in this Assembly previously the only reason it goes on is that the New Democratic Party defeated a Conservative government that was committed to its retention - a western Canadian government that was committed to its retention. And the New Democratic Party is going to have to live that one down.

You defeated a western prime minister, a western minister of transportation; you have supported Pierre Elliott Trudeau all the way, and that Pierre Elliott Trudeau is today doing what he can to bail this government out - a government that is headed for certain defeat, a government that is about to be reduced to an urban labor party. Mr. Speaker, there is an excellent reason why this government is going to be decimated. I don't mean just defeated but I mean decimated in rural Saskatchewan. This government has made one of the great mistakes. You know, it is a basic error: never underestimate your opponent.

This government has underestimated an opposition, but most importantly this government has underestimated the leader of this opposition. Let me tell you something. If and when you call this election, there are going to be two leaders on the hustings. There is going to be one who has become indecisive, one who is looking old beyond his years, one who doesn't really walk in with the authority and the aplomb and the coolness and the feeling that he has the grip on things that he used to have.

And then there is another one out there who is coming on young, fresh and just a darned good campaigner. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the great miscalculation you have made. I believe you have gone too far; I don't think you can back off. Grant Devine is going to kick the blazes out of Allan Blakeney in rural Saskatchewan. He is going to do it because Grant Devine has credibility. You lost your credibility when you brought that budget down, and you gave it to us; you passed it to us. If you ever tagged us with something successfully, you passed it right back to us and you lost that one forever. You gave us the one intangible with which we had perhaps had some difficulty. You gave us instant credibility! And let me tell you, Grant Devine is going to kick the blazes out of Allan Blakeney in rural Saskatchewan. He's just one heck of a good speaker up on the platform.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. THATCHER: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a look at the laughter that's going on over there. I want to take a look at the guys over there who are laughing. They will tumble like ten pins. I won't refer to the little member for Morse, because he's past tense. The member for Kinistino will be gone; the member for Regina Wascana, gone;

the member for Yorkton, dead; the one for Cut Knife-Lloydminster, gone. He's pretty shaky. I look at the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, desperately clinging to Ralph Goodale's coat tails, saying, "Come on Ralph, save me, help." He's probably gone. The member for Kelvington, gone; the member for Estevan, past tense.

Mr. Speaker, the respected member for Weyburn, who is not seeking re-election, is a gentleman whom we will all miss in this Assembly; very respectfully I suggest his seat is gone. We have it. The member for Saskatoon in the back row - gone. You're gone because you have underestimated your opposition. While you people have been neglecting this province for four years, Grant Devine has been out in the country and in the hustings and learned the hard political knocks of Saskatchewan politics. He is now ready to walk out into the hustings and kick you guys all over. Do you know what? As much as anything, you people have helped us. You have helped us because you have lost contact with what is going on out there. Grant Devine has been out there.

Mr. Speaker, last night I had a nomination meeting in Thunder Creek. I had had Grant Devine out in my constituency a couple of years ago. He was there last night addressing a packed, overflowing hall. I heard afterward from people who were saying, "When Grant was out here a couple of years ago . . . I just can't believe the way he's improved. The job he does in there - I just can't believe it."

Mr. Speaker, for those people over there with the big laughs and the big grins who are about to tumble, there's one way to confirm the accuracy of what I am saying. Get Al in here. I'll give him the floor; if he has something he wants to announce, he still has time for April 21. I'll give him the floor immediately. But for some reason, Al isn't here. I wonder where he is. He is probably trying to marshal the troops. Do you know why we're not into it? Because you can't marshal your troops. Your troops are saying, "Listen, we got trouble out there; there's turmoil." The people are unhappy. You have the polls. You know what I'm saying. You can't muster your people. So the argument goes on across the way. "What do we do? Do we go now, in April, because we're declining fast? Devine's coming up. The PCs are coming up. We're going down. Do we go now before it gets worse or do we sit tight until June? After all, we don't have to go. We don't have to go until October of '83." And the debate goes on. The debate goes on, "Do we go now before it gets worse, or do we wait and see what happens?" Well, if you want input from me, if I had a personal choice, Wednesday, June 23 would be an ironic date and I would love to be counting ballots that night, and I leave you with that suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, we know what's waiting for us - do we ever know what's waiting for us!

AN HON. MEMBER: — I saw you backing out of the town hall last night.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Speaker, I've been out on the hustings and I'm confident of what's there. And what waits for you in the decimation of the New Democratic Party. And you have helped us. And one of the reasons the decimation is there is that you have underestimated your opposition. And let me tell you, when you call it, Grant Devine is going to blow Allan Blakeney right out of the water because no longer do you have a free run on the issue that Allan Blakeney is Mr. Competency, because he's not any more. You know, 10 years have taken the edge off him. It's a tough job and I don't say that critically at all. It's a tough, tough job, but the edge is gone. Mr. Speaker, there's a new one out there and he's looking better every day. As I say, once again I invite this government to call it and let's get at it. We're tired of this side and want to go over there. Let's have the vote on this budget. Let's get this election called, and hopefully - well, not hopefully - shortly afterward we'll get a session of this legislature, when we're

over there, and we'll get a budget going that will bring the people of Saskatchewan some of the benefits that they deserve. I'm sorry, those doggone town halls again are still getting to me.

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that this budget contains many things that should be implemented, despite the fact that this budget contains many things that we have called for, there is a question of credibility. And you have no credibility. You have no credibility here; you have no credibility among your own people. You have no credibility out there. And the issue is one of credibility. This budget vote is a question of non-confidence in this government and I'm going to be joining in voting against it.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 38 - An Act to amend The Renters Property Tax Rebate Act

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I move on behalf of the minister that a bill to amend The Renters Property Tax Rebate Act be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to and the bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 39 - An Act to amend The Property Improvement Grant Act

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a bill to amend The Property Improvement Grant Act be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to and the bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 40 - An Act respecting Mortgage Renewal Assistance in Saskatchewan

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I move on behalf of the Hon. Mr. Smishek that a bill respecting mortgage renewal assistance in Saskatchewan be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to and the bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.