

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Monday, March 26, 1984

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.
Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

HON. MR. EMBURY: — Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in introducing to the House 25 students from Japan who are here with St. Mark's Lutheran Church, with chaperon Pastor Nachtigall. They are in Canada for two and a half weeks. They have visited Calgary. They are here in Regina until Saturday and then go on to Winnipeg, Vancouver, and then return home.

I would, on behalf of the House, welcome them to Regina and Saskatchewan and to this House. I hope that they have an enjoyable stay here and that the next half hour will be educational for you. I will be meeting with them at 3 o'clock for some drinks and a discussion. And on behalf of the House I would welcome them to Saskatchewan.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. LANE: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of pleasure that I welcome to the Assembly, and introduce to the Assembly, some 15 grade 7 and 8 students from Grand Coulee School. They are accompanied by Mr. Doug Berube. And I would like to take the opportunity to welcome the students to the Assembly. I'll look forward very much to meeting with them after question period.

I would ask all hon. members, Mr. Speaker, to join with me in welcoming the students from Grand Coulee.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly, some 60 students from Weyburn Junior High School in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Judy Buzowetsky and Jim Nedlecov. I hope that the students have enjoyed their tour of the legislature, and that they do enjoy question period and, as well, some of the functions of the legislature this afternoon. I will be meeting with them for pictures after question period and, as well, for some refreshments in Room 218.

So I would ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join with me in welcoming them here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the rest of the Assembly, an old friend and colleague from south of the border, Senator Bruce Bakewell, from North Dakota. I ask Bruce to stand up and be recognized.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Bruce, of course, is involved in the boundary commission that was set up some months ago between North Dakota and Saskatchewan, and is a friend of mine, and a friend of Saskatchewan, and a friend of Canada, and he's here to see democracy in action today, and I'm sure he'll get a fair display of it.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, it's also a pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through you, to the Assembly, a very distinguished group of visitors from the province of Quebec, and my counterpart in Quebec. And I'll attempt to read their names, and I want you to understand that my French is even worse than my Ukrainian. I would like to introduce the Minister of Labour, Raynald Frechette. Would you please stand as your names are . . . Mr. Maurice Bernier, executive assistant to the minister. Mrs. Julia Cardinal, political attaché to the minister. Mr. Lionel Bernier, vice-president of the workers' compensation board. Mr. Denis Giasson, program director of the board. And Mr. Roland Longchamp, actuary to the board.

On behalf of the members of the Assembly, we welcome you here. I look forward to visiting and having lunch with you tomorrow at noon to discuss our common concerns, and we'll see you tomorrow. So, on behalf of the group, I would like you to please welcome them in the usual manner. Thank you very much.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Reduction of Staff at Department of Highways

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, my question deals with the approach of this government to people. My question is addressed to the Premier. Last week in the Assembly your Minister of Finance had this to say in the budget speech, and I quote:

The ultimate objective of every economic development policy is the creation of permanent jobs. Whatever short or long-term goals we set ourselves, the objective is to ensure that the people of this province find worthwhile and challenging jobs.

So "permanent, worthwhile, challenging jobs." That was Wednesday night's budget speech.

But less than 24 hours later your government wiped out hundreds of permanent, worthwhile, challenging jobs — more than 400 by last count. My question is this to you, Mr. Premier: how can your government be so lacking in candour (I might say "two-faced" but I will say "lacking in candour") as to proclaim jobs as your first priority on Wednesday night and fire some 400 employees the next day — Thursday?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, clearly there's a difference in philosophy between the members opposite and the members on this side of the House. We have been encouraging, Mr. Speaker, the growth in the private sector. It is our objective, Mr. Speaker, to make the bureaucracy in government smaller, Mr. Speaker, and provide more opportunities in the private sector through tax cuts. That's clearly a difference from the previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, each department in government has to make the kinds of decisions it thinks are necessary to make sure that the bureaucracy doesn't continue to grow; and number two, that we can save money for the public when we're providing the same kind of service. Now we can go through health budgets, agricultural budgets, transportation budgets, highway budgets, Mr. Speaker, and where we can reduce the size of the bureaucracy, save money, and provide more service for the same amount of money, or provide more services because we are saving money, we're going to do it.

So I say, in summary, Mr. Speaker, it is not our objective to increase the size of government. No, it's our objective to reduce the size of the bureaucracy. At the same time it's our objective to

encourage the private sector; to reduce the taxes; to encourage private investment and economic activity – and both of those are taking place in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier has spoken of dismissals in many agencies. We have not yet had an opportunity to get an accurate accounting of these dismissals, nor has the public, nor has the press. My supplementary then, to you, is this, sir: in approximate numbers, how many jobs have been abolished as a result of this budget, and how many people have already been fired? How many will be fired in the next month or two? And, how many will not be called back to work who might otherwise have been expected to be called back to work at the commencement of the construction season?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, the total impact on the private sector, and on the public sector, of this budget, or last year's budget, or the first budget, is something that I don't have specific details on today.

Mr. Speaker, I will confirm, I will confirm, Mr. Speaker, that the growth in expenditures in this budget was the smallest growth in government in what, eighteen years? Eighteen years, Mr. Speaker. That means a lot of departments, and a lot of government employees, a lot of ministers had to make some difficult decisions.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we provided the opportunities in the private sector, and they are growing in the private sector, and the members opposite know that, 'cause you can look at the numbers. And that will continue, because it is the will of the people of Saskatchewan to make sure that we don't have bureaucracies growing but, in fact, bureaucracies become small.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary. I asked the Premier, in approximate numbers, how many people were fired. He gave me that answer. I am asking you again, sir: do you not know how many people lost their jobs because of the budget you brought down on Wednesday? Or will you not tell the House how many people lost their jobs because of the budget you brought down last Wednesday?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that we have a lot of positions that aren't filled; I know that we have a lot of positions that are half-time, part-time; and, we have some that are full-time. Some of those that aren't filled, we're not going to fill them, and that's a conscious decision not to fill them. And some of the part-time, the part-time will go to part-time work, whether it's in Highways, or whether it's in agricultural industry, or wherever it may be. And, some of the full-time will go to the private sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just say that the change that this budget represents is a smaller bureaucracy, and an increase in the private sector, because that's the will of the people.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Supplementary, Mr. Premier. My question again to you is this: do you not know, or will you not tell the House, how many people lost their jobs? Never mind whether they were vacant positions or not vacant positions. How many people lost their jobs because of the budget brought down by your colleague on Wednesday night, and how many more are going to lose their jobs as a direct result of that budget in the next couple of months?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, there will be thousands and thousands of jobs created in the private sector, and there will be fewer jobs in government. That's what I can provide the members of the opposition. So, I know, Mr. Speaker, that the size of the bureaucracy in Regina largely increased by 10,000 people from 1971 to 1981; a growth of 10,000. We're going the other way, Mr. Speaker. We are cutting taxes, and cutting the bureaucracy. That is happening across

Canada. It's happening across the United States. Most responsible jurisdictions are doing that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, there is clearly a difference in philosophy. The members opposite would want to see bigger and bigger government, and they say that all the time. They want to raise taxes. They know that. They want to buy farms. They want to buy insurance companies. We don't believe in that. We want smaller government, more private sectors, and it will continue.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. Given your philosophy, which says that there's nothing wrong with firing some hundreds of people from the public service, as you have outlined to us now, and given your philosophy that you need not tell this House how many you're firing, may I ask a further question? Given that you're going to fire people, isn't it reasonable that you fire them with some sense of humanity? And I say that horror stories are reaching me which say that employees, and I can give a couple of examples, employees have received notices of transfers to other positions, and then read on the list of jobs abolished the positions to which they were transferred.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Like reading your own name on a tombstone.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — That's right. Now I ask you this, sir.

That's got to be funny. You guys laughed, you know. That's got to be funny.

AN HON. MEMBER: — That was a sneaky one.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Do you not agree that this sort of conduct, of advising people that they are transferred and then advising them that the jobs to which they were transferred are abolished, is totally inconsistent with the claims you have made about operating a compassionate government?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Not at all, Mr. Speaker. Not at all. Let me just make something very clear. At the rate that the previous administration was going, Mr. Speaker, thousands and thousands and thousands of young people would continue to leave the province of Saskatchewan, and that's already the record. At the rate they were going, the government was into everything. What we have decided to do, Mr. Speaker, is say no more growth in big government. And they don't like that, and I understand why they don't like it, because that's their philosophy — to create bigger and bigger and bigger government.

Mr. Speaker, somebody has to pay for that bigger government. Somebody has to have their taxes increased for bigger government.

We have said we want the private sector to create the jobs, and they will employ the people. As far as of notice, Mr. Speaker, we give eight weeks notice, eight weeks. The first . . . when is the first one, in June? June 1st, before anybody has to move at all. And, Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite know, they have full bumping rights that exist all the way down through the whole system. And at the same time we have the private sector, as I am informed here today — for example, two press releases, and I'm sure they have seen them already — the private sector wants 150 to 250 people to work in the construction industry now.

So the combination of eight weeks, bumping rights included, plus the private sector wanting growth, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me we will much better be able to afford the kind of government we have in the province of Saskatchewan, than one that would have been left under that administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. By the Premier's remarks he would have us believe that he is in the process of cutting back in civil servants in Regina in highly-paid positions. I wonder, in the Department of Highways and Transportation, if he can tell me how many positions and how much the budget is cut in executive administration.

HON. MR. DEVINE: — I'm not sure I caught the last part of it.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is this: he is trying to explain to the world, the province, and the press, that he is attempting to cut back in executive positions and bureaucrats in the Department of Highways. I want him to look in the blue book on page 45, where executive administration in the Department of highways and Transportation has increased from 813,000 to 934,000 in the executive services.

Can you tell me, Mr. Premier, why, if you're cutting back 250 positions of people who do the actual work, pour the pavement, and build the roads — why you're increasing the executive administration by 15 per cent at a time when you're throwing 400 families out of work in the province of Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, we're not throwing 400 families out of work. Mr. Speaker, there are, and we are, creating opportunities all over the province of Saskatchewan. And as I have mentioned, in the road-building industry they need people to be employed there. We don't want to have a bigger and bigger government and say that we can only build roads, for example, in government. Everybody else around the country seems to be able to do it at lower cost in the private sector.

And it isn't, Mr. Speaker, the changes aren't just at the executive level. If there's an entire department that is in the road-building business, then we no longer want to have road building in the government. Then the department goes. The whole department will move. Now with respect to the specifics, I'm sure the Minister of Highways can answer the specifics on personnel. The Minister of Northern Saskatchewan can handle the specifics. I don't deal in those on a day-to-day basis.

Increase in Cabinet Ministers

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. He mentions he doesn't understand specifics, and I quite agree with him. But I would like to know, in an area that he is responsible for, in an area that he is responsible for, at a time when your government is throwing 400 families out of work — does it make sense to you, in the area of cabinet ministers we see an increase of to 25, the largest cabinet in the history of the province? We also see an increase in budget of about 50 per cent in moneys going to cabinet ministers in this year's budget at the time you're throwing 400 families out of work. Could you rationalize and justify that, and do you know the specifics of that area?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know that the MLAs are elected, and they're here whether we want to put them in cabinet or not. They know that's the case. So it's quite a bit different than a department or the size of government. We happened to elect 56 members on this side.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — And whether they're in cabinet or not, Mr. Speaker, they're here. You can't fire them. Right? They're here.

Mr. Speaker, we have 56 MLAs on this side of the House. I venture to say, maybe that's the

largest number of MLAs on this side of the House ever, as far as I know. And, Mr. Speaker, we appoint four more cabinet ministers than the peak of that administration, which had 21, and we have 25. And they're saying, "Oh, my gosh, look at the growth in the MLAs."

Well, there's a big growth in MLAs; I'll grant him that. Right. And there's a huge growth in cabinet, a tremendous, big growth that makes it four people – four people – over their administration, and this is a huge bureaucracy. We have saved millions and millions and millions of dollars, and the opposition member from Shaunavon says four people have been added to the bureaucracy in this administration, in cabinet, and that's a big crying shame.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that the member opposite doesn't understand what people in Saskatchewan want to see. People in Saskatchewan want to see a smaller bureaucracy; they want to see less tax; and they want to see opportunities in the private sector, not growth in government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would wonder whether the people of the province would agree with a 52 per cent increase in the monies going to cabinet ministers. I would doubt it. But my question is in another area which deals with PR in various departments, another area which, if you were cutting back, throwing people out of work, you would assume that there wouldn't be great amounts of money for public relations, where glossy brochures would be sent out to help get Tories re-elected.

And I wonder how you justify it, in light of the fact that Economic Development and trade has an increase in PR of 49 per cent; Highway department, where you're throwing people out of work to the tune of 250 families, an increase in PR, 72 per cent; public relations in parks and Renewable Resources increased by 38 per cent; Tourism and Small . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. Order, order! The member is making a speech, and this is a supplementary question that you asked for. And I would ask the member, if he has a supplementary, to be concise and to ask his question.

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, when I was interrupted I was listing a number of areas where there were huge increases in spending in public relations, and I want the Premier to identify why he has money to increase public relations in Tourism and Small Business, up to 103 per cent increase in that area, at the same time throwing 400 families out of work and onto the welfare rolls.

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt in my mind that the member opposite doesn't understand economic activity and doesn't understand an economy. I mean that's very clear. He doesn't have to reply but, in answering his question, I would ask him: how does he feel about closing \$600 million worth of mines in northern Saskatchewan? How does he feel about that? Six hundred million dollars. I'll walk door to door in Shaunavon . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. The answer that . . . Order, please. Order. I would ask the Premier to answer the question, but there is no opportunity cover all areas.

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I'm mostly familiar with my estimates, and this is like estimates. But, in response to the hon. member's questions about increase in expenditures, yes, we are increasing economic development and trade; yes, we're increasing health, yes, we're increasing tourism, Mr. Speaker, to promote trade, to promote safety.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you an example, if I might. The top five positions, Mr. Speaker, in Executive Council, earn on average 4 per cent less than the previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — You've got the sheets. You've got the sheets. The top 10, Mr. Speaker, in Executive Council earn 1.2 per cent on average over the previous administration after two years. I mean you're asking about administrative costs in this bureaucracy. The top 15 in my department, Executive Council . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, you asked. Three per cent more, Mr. Speaker, than the previous administration, after two years. And the top 20, it's 3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we have held . . . Mr. Speaker, I'm attempting to put the answer in context. The member opposite doesn't seem to understand \$600 million, so I got it down into 4 per cent and 2 per cent and 3 per cent. My Executive Council is spending less than the previous administration after two years. We are trimming here and trimming there and trimming here, so we can spend more in health, more in agriculture, more in economic development, and more in tourism. And people like that because they see the future, the tax growth, the base, the increase in economic activity in those areas of strength, not in government, but in areas in the private sector where we can see growth and economic development and enthusiasm and investment, and we are going to continue to provide that — that economic excitement, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Reduction of Staff at Department of Highways

MR. LUSNEY: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Highways. On Friday the Minister of Highways claimed that he was firing all these people from his department to save money for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister (he refused to table the documents then): will you table the exact documents, the formula that you used to determine the saving that you are going to make, what you used in the calculations of determining the savings for the government or the private sector? Will you table those documents, so that we could see what you used in those calculations and how accurate your figures were?

HON. MR. GARNER: — Well, Mr. Speaker, another lesson in how the government works, and how this Assembly works, is that you can't table information during question period. And I'm very prepared to discuss this with all the members of the Assembly when we go into estimates of the Department of Highways and Transportation. But just a bit of information for the member to decipher right now; I would just give him some examples, of seal-coating in the province, and I won't try and explain it to him; I'll just give him the figures and do it later.

Seal-coat costs, Mr. Speaker, by the private sector: \$1,822. per kilometre. That's done by the private sector. The public sector, meaning the Department of Highways and Transportation — I'll take it slow on that — average cost . . . (inaudible) . . . is \$2,272. Mr. Speaker, what this means in seal-coating alone: 24.7 per cent savings by doing it with the private sector. The member asked the question. I'll give him another example of another aspect of the department, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we can look at grading. Average of private contracts in the province of Saskatchewan for '81 to '83 (while they were government too), cost of the private sector was \$1.51 per cubic metre of earth moved. What it cost the Department of Highways and Transportation to move that same material is \$1.98 per cubic metre, taking in all costs. Mr. Speaker, that's another example of where it costs 31.1 per cent more tax dollars to build those roads, building them with the Department of Highways and Transportation's crews.

I have additional information, Mr. Speaker, but I don't want to abuse question period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, I asked you if you would table the information for the details of the calculations that you used in coming up with those figures. Do you not agree that anyone could come up with figures like you've come up with today if you don't have anything to prove those figures? What I'm saying is: will you table some of those documents and figures so that the people of Saskatchewan could see how accurate they are, and whether you're telling them the truth, or whether you're just having a big smoke-screen put out there and try to make them believe something that isn't true.

HON. MR. GARNER: — Mr. Speaker, once again, I mean, I said previously I'm very prepared to table this information, give it to the members of the Assembly, even the members of the media, Mr. Speaker, and to let the people of Saskatchewan know that by turning this work over to the private sector, the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, in the year '83 and '84, will save in the area of \$2.5 million of their tax dollars. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is very important, because what this means to the people of Saskatchewan is that there will be about 25 kilometres of highways built by turning this work over to the private sector, versus doing it by the department. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious we're not going to agree. The NDP had their way of building up bigger government. Bigger government — increased taxes. The direction of this government is to turn work over to the private sector where it is economically feasible to give the taxpayers of Saskatchewan a good transportation system for all the people of Saskatchewan. They have their way; we have our way. I believe our way is right, Mr. Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introduction of Clerk Assistant

MR. SPEAKER: — Before orders of the day, I beg to inform the Assembly that Craig James, Esq., has been appointed as Clerk Assistant. Craig, would you stand please and be recognized.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we could convert motions for return and written questions to debatable. The first written questions will be question 1 through to question 28, I believe, to be converted to notice of motion for return debatable.

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, as well, if we could convert return 62 to 99 to debatable.

MR. SPEAKER: — Returns 62 to 99 debatable.

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, that should read 38, not 28. First, 1 through 38.

MR. SPEAKER: — Could you give me a correction — 1 through 38 debatable?

HON. MR. ANDREW: — Mr. Speaker, on the blues, the first 1 through 38 of motions for return not debatable, I move that they be made debatable, which would then move it to special order.

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. Andrew that the Assembly resolve itself into the committee of finance.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, when I closed my remarks on Wednesday evening, I had touched on some aspects of the budget. I had talked for the most part about the budget speech. This afternoon I propose to talk about the budget and the Estimates and, therefore, I will be talking about quite a different subject, since the budget speech bore remarkably little relationship to the budget in the Estimates.

And I want to review the spending program in this third Progressive Conservative budget in some detail. And I say that that is absolutely necessary in this Assembly because, as I've earlier said, the remarks of the Minister of Finance, the other night on prime-time television bore no relation to the facts as set out in the budget documents.

In short, Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the real budget, not the prime-time sales pitch of the Minister of finance, which we heard last Wednesday evening, but the hard, cold facts shown in the budget *Estimates* tabled by that minister.

The budget speech was designed as a document written to conceal rather than to reveal; designed to fail to inform, rather than to inform. It's worth noting that the minister's plan almost worked. Some people were taken in by his honeyed words on prime-time television. But thanks to the ham-handed and hard-hearted actions of the Minister of Highways, the public and the news media have come to appreciate this budget for what it is.

I'm going to quote a short piece from last Wednesday's budget, just to show how little is the relationship between the speech on prime-time television and reality. And I will quote those words from the Minister of Finance, dealing with employment, which we've earlier heard this afternoon:

The ultimate objective of every economic development policy is the creation of permanent jobs. Whatever short-term or long-term goals we set ourselves, the objective is to ensure that people of this province find worthwhile and challenging jobs —permanent, worthwhile, challenging jobs.

With 40,000 people unemployed in Saskatchewan, who could object to a budget which was supposed to create permanent, worthwhile, challenging jobs? Who could find any objection to that objective? Or, hearing these words, Mr. Speaker, who would have guessed that this budget was, in fact, a job-cut budget, not a job-creation budget? Hearing that commitment from the Minister of Finance, who would have guessed that we were going to be faced with the largest mass firings from the government for many, many years? Hundreds of them, some people with more than 25 years of service, more than 25 years of service in the city of Prince Albert, fired by this government. There wasn't a whisper about that in the budget speech. But, of course, that bit of hard truth wouldn't have sounded very good on prime-time television.

Another example, after hearing the unequivocal statements of the Minister of Finance in the budget speech about his government's commitment to health care, who would have guessed that almost every single branch of the Department of Health had its staff cut? Cuts of dental nurses, of psychiatric nurses, of preventative health workers, right across the . . . (inaudible) . . .

Health care is a service that the minister said would not be cut. There would be no cutbacks. That's what he said in the speech. But the reality is very, very different. But, once again, that bit of

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hard truth wouldn't have looked very good on prime-time television.

So today we will be talking about what's in the PC budget, not about what was in the PC speech on prime-time television, but what was in the budget – the one that outlined in detail the government's spending estimates, the one that said that service after service would be cut, and cut sharply. This is what we will talk about this afternoon.

Now I want to talk first about the Department of Highways, because the Minister of Highways was the first to blow the whistle on the Minister of Finance and his prime-time television sales pitch. The Minister of Finance gave us a story suggesting that there would be no massive cuts at all. The Minister of Highways certainly told another tale. He blew the whistle, I suppose, unwittingly, but he blew it none the less. Within 24 hours of the budget speech, the Minister of Highways let everybody know what this budget was all about.

In the face of the budget speech rhetoric about job creation, the P.C. government was about to fire hundreds of people. Rather than create jobs, the government planned to destroy jobs. Two minister with very different stories from this two-faced government.

It's obvious now that the Minister of Finance thought that all he had to do was mouth the right sorts of words on television, and everybody would believe that the budget meant was he said it meant, that somehow the hard realities that follow from that speech would be lost in the shuffle. But the Minister of Highways blew that plan. Not only did he start firing people, but he began to display through the news media just how callous and uncaring and warped this government's approach to people really is.

Here is a man who fired hundreds of people, who put them and their families on the unemployment lines, and what does he say? Does he agree with it? Does he acknowledge what he has done? Not at all, not at all.

And I want to put on the public record some of the very heartless statements made by the Minister of Highways when challenged about the effects of this budget on his department. He had said that there were no firings and, when pressed, he said:

Well, I prefer not to think of these moves as firings. They are simply changing bosses, being transferred from the public sector to the private sector. It's freedom of choice.

That's what he said: "It's freedom of choice."

At another point he said this: "I'm just giving these people the opportunity to look for work in the private sector," as if that man from Prince Albert who had 26 years of service didn't have the freedom of choice to get a job in the private sector for 26 years. He didn't have to be fired by the Minister of Highways to have that choice. That's not freedom of choice; that's denial of choice.

Can you believe it, Mr. Speaker – a minister dealing with loyal employees of his department of over 25 years standing, and him trying to fob them off with that sort of flippant comment? I think that sort of comment is sheer nonsense. So do the people who were fired, and so, indeed, do the people of Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — And I think this sort of comment tells more than I could possibly say in half an hour about what this government thinks about people, what its commitment is to people, what its commitment is to treat people with some sort of common decency.

But we have heard on many occasions that the private sector are going to hire these people, and we are told that there are letters from the road builders of Saskatchewan, and the Association of

consulting Engineers, about how many of these people would be hired. Well, I read those letters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they assure the minister that if the contractors get more work they will hire more people. I would expect them to say that. They give absolutely no assurance that all, or a half, or a quarter of the people fired by the Minister of Highways will have jobs with the road builders. There is absolutely no assurance of that, and indeed, what they say suggests the opposite.

They say, quite frankly, there is currently a surplus capacity in the industry. Now what does that mean? It's pretty simple. It means that the contractors are not now using all of the people they have used in the past, that people who have worked for the contractors in the past aren't working for them now. And if those contractors get additional work, who do you think they'll hire first – their long-time employees now on layoff or some people from the Department of Highways, or elsewhere, with whom they have never worked? Well, that question answers itself. It makes common sense to know that the Department of Highways people are unlikely to get jobs before the contractors have given employment to their long-time staffs. And those fired by the department simply have no guarantee. Notwithstanding the comments of the Minister of Highways, they have no guarantee that they will get any work.

The Minister of Highways continues to be oblivious to the human costs of these mass firings, and he continues to ignore the fact that we're talking about people with families, talking about people who have hopes and aspirations for the future. And he ignores the fact that there are already 40,000 people unemployed in this province, a larger figure than when he took office, and a much, much larger figure than we have seen for many years, indeed many decades, in this province.

The minister claims that putting all of these people out of work will save money for the Department of Highways, and in this House he quotes figures, but in this House he refuses to table any evidence. He suggests that he can't table material during question period, which we all know, but he certainly could have tabled the information five minutes later in the order of the day, and he did not, and he will not. He talks about saying that he will share it when we come to estimates.

I predict, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we come to estimates he will give us figures totally unsubstantiated by calculations, and we will never know whether or not this privatizing of that section of the Department of Highways will save any public money. He simply will not provide the information, and one would have thought he would have done that as some sort of justification for firing hundreds of employees, many of them long time.

This year's budget, and we have to face this fact, contains less money for highway construction than did last year's budget, less money for highway construction than did last year's budget. There will be increases in costs. Inflation affects us all. And, therefore, the Department of Highways cannot build as many miles of road this year, with the same number of dollars, as it did last year. In view of that fact, and because he is providing less money for the Department of Highways, I believe, and I believe the figures will show this, that less highway, fewer miles of highways will be built, and fewer people will be employed, whether they work in the public sector or the private sector. Those are the hard facts.

The Minister of Highways is going to continue to be known somewhat facetiously as the minister of pot-holes. And he can issue as many press releases as he likes talking about highway safety, and the public of Saskatchewan are going to believe that their highways would be a good deal more safe if he would spend less time issuing press releases and more time filling pot-holes.

What has happened to this department? Gone is all this talk about four-laning the Trans-Canada Highway and four-laning the Yellowhead. We heard all this in 1982 from members opposite. We haven't heard much about four-laning the Yellowhead from members opposite. They stopped talking about that when they assumed the positions on the treasury benches. So there won't be

very much building. There won't be very much building, whether it's done in the public sector or the private sector, and there will, indeed, be many people not working, in spite of what the minister says. The department has been cut almost everywhere. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not everywhere. The communications section – that's the one that turns out press releases – has not been cut. It, in fact, has been expanded, expanded to the tune of 72 per cent because the minister believes that press releases are somehow going to be a substitute for highway construction.

Well, it's not going to work. The member for Pelly will spend a good deal more time dealing with the specific aspects of the budget of the Department of highways, and when we look at those aspects, we are going to find that there is far less work provided for this year than in previous years. This minister is fond of talking about the need to spruce up our highways and to put different signs along the road. We have all manner of rumours coming to us about what's going to be in signs.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Blue signs.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Blue signs, blue signs – to indicate the sort of blue mood that overcomes almost anyone who drives on our secondary highway system. And I invite anyone to drive on Highway No. 13. That's the one in which the Minister of Highways, with great fanfare, put signs all along calling it the Redcoat Trail. And all I wish is that he would understand that this doesn't mean that he has to keep it a trail, and believe you men, that's all it is in some of its parts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I call upon the Premier and the Minister of Finance to reverse the decision made by the Minister of Highways, to reverse the decision made by the Minister of Highways, and to reinstate at least some of those employees, the ones with years and years of service.

You could tell him to cut back his communications budget. People will live without so many press releases. They would like to think that employees of 15 and 20 years service still had jobs, and they'll appreciate that more than another few press releases. And if this has to be done, Mr. Premier, at the expense of the minister's pride, or even his removal, so be it. I think the people of Saskatchewan will survive if he is given freedom of choice to take up some other duties for which he is, perhaps, better suited.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the financial management of the red-ink Tories, and to the mounting deficit. Mr. Speaker, this year is 1984. And that should have warned us. That should have warned us because George Orwell told us about 1984. He told me that in that year words would be turned upside down, and they wouldn't have the same meaning they once had. George Orwell called it newspeak. I think after this budget speech we're going to have to call it budgetspeak.

Listen to these fine examples of newspeak from the budget speech '84, from these reigning Tories:

We are reducing the deficit, and we will continue to do so.

And again:

We have significantly reduced the deficit.

I'll try that one again.

We have significantly reduced the deficit.

The documents show that the deficit will go up from \$562 million to \$829 million by the end of the year.

From 560 to 830 – now in newspeak that's a reduction. And that's what the minister said. We are reducing the deficit. True, we're moving it from 560 to 830, but we're reducing it. Unfortunately, it isn't so. I don't believe it and, much more to the point, the bankers don't believe it.

And the amount they are forcing us to pay on this reduced deficit is going up impressibly. Just the increase in interest over what we pay on the deficit in 1983, and then the increase to 1984, is more than \$25 million, more than enough to pay all in one year the five-year program announced by the minister of 1,000 new nursing home beds and replacing 500 existing beds. One thousand new nursing home beds, 500 existing beds replaced – that's what we could do with just the increase in interest on this deficit which the Minister of Finance has assured us is being reduced.

That indeed is newspeak '84. The facts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are clear and harsh. To finance this deficit of over \$829 million a year at today's interest rates, it's going to cost us \$100 million a year, \$275,000 a day, \$11,000 each hour – each hour of each day of each week of each month of each year, indefinitely – unless we can find some more money to pay off the principal. Eleven thousand a year pouring out of your pocket and your province to Toronto and New York to finance three massive deficits in three PC budgets.

My point is this: the PC deficit threatens Saskatchewan economic future. It threatens the long term financial security of every family in this province. It prevents us from investigating new opportunities. It prevents us from investing imaginatively, or even adequately, in new opportunities, because we're caught up paying old bills — \$100 million a year to pay old bills. The bills from the 1982 provincial election when the PC government promised themselves into power. With this third PC budget we're beginning to see the real costs of the deficit in lost services, lost jobs, and lost opportunities.

Well, that would be bad enough, but there's a further consequence. There's a further consequence, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Budget deficits mean high interest rates. Budget deficits mean high interest rates. And each deficit by each government in Canada increases the pressure. Where our government should be acting to keep interest rates down, it's doing just the opposite. It's running up massive deficits, and I say again, massive deficits mean higher interest rates, and I fear that we will face those higher interest rates very soon.

Now how important are budget deficits? Well, at the federal level the PC leader, Brian Mulroney, when asked that question last week said this, and the question was this; on your list of economic priorities, where would you put an attack on the deficit? Mulroney – “Right on the top of the heap.” Right on the top of the heap. And he goes on to explain why this must be done unless interest rates . . . in order to keep interest rates from going up and up. Well, over on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, with this Minister of Finance, attacking budget deficits is right on the top of the heap, on the heap of Tory promises which he has discarded with one sweep of his hand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I deplore this money stream pouring out of Toronto and New York to finance this government's soaring deficit, I'm not saying that the government is spending too much money to serve its people; far from it. No, what's wrong with this budget is not that the government is spending too much, it's that it's taking in too little. And it's not that you and I are paying too little in taxes. No way. No way. All the taxes we pay are up. Income tax is up; sales tax is up; tobacco tax is up; liquor revenue is up; motor vehicle is up (that one's up close to 10 per cent).

And we're getting a big increase in the amount of money we're getting from the federal government to pay for medicare and for universities, up \$48 million or 15 per cent. So we're getting a good deal extra money. Members opposite are getting a good deal extra money from ordinary taxpayers when they pay their provincial taxes and when they pay their federal taxes.

Well, what's the problem then? The problem is that the resource companies are not paying enough. Take oil. Take oil. We are told almost daily that the oil industry is booming as never before, and perhaps that's true. And I certainly hope so. I certainly hope so. and there's no doubt that the prices we're getting for our oil are at all-time highs, so far as Saskatchewan is concerned. I hope that won't be denied. So we've got a booming oil industry, and prices are at their top.

Yet, we're getting no more money from all of this extra oil at the higher prices, and all that land-sale money which we hear so much about. All those added together aren't as much as we got from oil two or three years ago.

Now how do you account for that? Well, I can certainly account for that. I can certainly account for that. And certainly I can account for it because the gifts which that government has given to oil companies are massive. If we were collecting the same amount per barrel as we did two or three years ago (let's make it three years ago), we'd have \$100 million more. If we were collecting the same percentage of the selling price, we would have far more than that. Far more than that. And I think it's pretty clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why this government has to cut back. It is not collecting money from our resources.

Or take potash. We're told that the potash industry is bouncing back. Well, in the best year in royalties and in PCS profits, this province got well over \$300 million from the potash industry. Well over 300 million. My bet is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we will not get one-third of that this year. My bet is we won't get a third of that \$300 million. You cannot give away resources and still have money for services for people. It's a simple choice. You can't give away resources and still have money for services to people. Resource give-aways or services to people – it's a simple choice, and this government has chosen resource give-aways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now turn to health spending. I've already mentioned it very briefly, but I want to look a little more fully to see just how different is the real budget from the one painted by the Minister of Finance on Wednesday night. In the opening passages of his address, the Minister of Finance set out the principles on which he said he was organizing his budget, and here's one of them: "We will not contemplate cuts in spending for basic health and education services." I want to say that again because I think the people of Saskatchewan will want to measure his words against what his budget does. And whether or not members in this House are paying attention, I want to assure them the public of Saskatchewan are paying attention to what happens to their Department of Health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — His statement last year was much the same: "There is never a right time to cut essential services." That's what he said last year. Now, I want to look at spending in the Department of Health to point out just how far he has strayed from these principles which he outlined on prime-time television.

The department's estimates cover 30 items; 23 of them involve staff. The other 16 are grants to other agencies. Of the 23 items involving staff, 1 has had its staff increased, 2 keep the same number of staff, and 20 lose staff. Twenty branches of the department of public health lose staff. Every single major activity of the Department of Health is suffering a staff cut, and some suffered a cut in actual dollars allotted. And I think we all know that, with inflation still rolling on, anybody who has fewer dollars this year than last year to carry on a service is suffering a very sharp cut.

Now, where have these service cuts been made? Well, there's community health services. This is one which isn't basic to the government opposite. These are the public health nurses and all of the health education and health promotional activities. They've had a staff cut.

And then there's the children's dental plan – another program not basic to the government opposite. It's had a big cut – 25 people and \$1 million – from a government which said that there would be no cuts in basic health services. Well, I call the children's dental program a basic health service, and I'm sorry that the government opposite thinks it's a frill. Then let's talk about mental health. Obviously this isn't a basic health service, because members opposite said that they wouldn't cut basic health services, and they're certainly cutting basic mental health. There have been staff cuts at the mental hospital at North Battleford, the psychiatric centre at Weyburn, the psychiatric centre at Yorkton, the psychiatric centre at Prince Albert, and here at Regina. There have been actual dollar cuts, meaning sharp cuts in services, at North Battleford, Weyburn, and Yorkton. Taken all together, the mental health budget is increased by less than two per cent. And in the face of rising inflation, in the face of ever more urgent calls upon the mental health services, that is a cut, and it's a sharp cut, and it's a cut in a basic health service.

The minister has cut the money to fight alcoholism. The amount of money provided for the alcoholism commission is down in actual dollars. Now, I know this government doesn't think that alcoholism is very serious as a problem in this province, but we do. On this we know what the government thinks because we know that they have, at one and the same time, encouraged a greatly expanded program for advertising of alcohol in the media, and now they're cutting the money to fight the consequences of that program. They're cutting the money for alcohol education and the work of the alcohol commission. We say that mounting the battle against alcohol abuse is vital, and is a basic public service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — We say that any government which permits widespread advertising of alcoholic beverages, and then cuts the amount of money to fight alcoholism, is a government which ought to bear the responsibility for the social havoc which is wreaked by alcohol abuse.

We're sorry that the government doesn't believe that this is a basic health service, but out of the words of the minister who said he wouldn't cut basic health services and did cut that money, we know they don't regard it as basic.

I want to talk about another service which I think is basic, but they obviously don't. and I'm talking about home care. Everywhere I go, people tell me that there's a growing crisis in the care for people who are old and unwell in this province. I have constituents in general hospitals who should be in level 4 facilities. I have constituents at home, being cared for with great difficulty, who should be in nursing homes. I have constituents who need much more home care, not less. I believe that these conditions are true all across the province. Yet, the grants and allowances for home care in this budget are cut by over \$1 million, and that will mean less help, not more, for all these people out there who need home care. The government claims that this isn't a basic health service, otherwise they wouldn't have cut it. I believe it is a basic health service, and I believe the people of Saskatchewan believe that home care is a basic health service and should not be cut by the callous government opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — One more comment – and I'm glad that the Minister of Health is here. One more comment about what this government thinks is basic to good health care. The grants for the operation of nursing homes have been increased by less than 1 per cent. I want to

say that again. The grants for the operations of nursing homes have been increased by less than 1 per cent.

Now I assume there are going to be a few more new beds opened. I certainly hope so. The costs for existing homes, for food, and for staff and power bills and the rest, will undoubtedly go up a great deal more than 1 per cent. So in the face of these facts, and an increase in the budget for nursing homes of less than 1 per cent, it means one of three things. I'm going to ask the Minister of Health to tell us. It means either that beds will be closed —which I don't suppose, but could be; or that the type of care received in nursing homes will be sharply downgraded — which I hope is not true; or that there are going to be major increases in the charges to senior citizens in nursing homes — increases far exceeding any 5 per cent guide-line. And if there are going to be increases in charges, far above any 5 per cent guide-lines, I call upon the Minister of Health to advise this House and the public how much those increases are going to be, and when they're going to take effect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Well, as is clear from what I said, Mr. Speaker, most of the basic health services, sad to say, lost out to the bankers. The bankers got there first; they got the money, and there isn't enough money to maintain basic health services. But not in every case, not in every case.

Some parts of the department of public health are doing quite nicely. The amount being paid to doctors under the medical care insurance commission is not going up less than 5 per cent, like hospitals, or not going up less than 1 per cent, like nursing homes, but is going up by 10 per cent, which only goes to prove that with this government some things are indeed very basic.

I will now turn briefly to education. We live in a fast-paced and a world of far-reaching change, a world of innovation, what Alvin Toffler has called "*The Third Wave*." We live in a world where lifestyles change rapidly, where our need to respond to new changes is greater than faced by any generation in the history of mankind.

To survive in this sort of a world we have to be able to adapt, and able to adapt quickly. We've got to spot our opportunities quickly. And we have to take advantage of those opportunities quickly. To do that, we must have a modern education system, one that responds to the needs of Saskatchewan young people. In these times, short-change education is not only not serving our young people, but is threatening the future of our province. Indeed, a high-quality education system is one of the best known, term investments that the people of Saskatchewan could make.

A high-quality educational system will go a long way to guaranteeing that our children are fitted for the jobs of tomorrow, and it will provide them with all the tools necessary to adapt to the changes which we know are going to come. We don't know what those changes are going to be. We do not know how to prepare specifically for those changes. We do know that our young people have to be equipped to adapt to a changing world.

Our educational system is vital to Saskatchewan's long-term economic prosperity. That's why it's so surprising to see that this budget lacks any sense of the importance of education in our society. There is no commitment to high-quality education in this budget. There is no commitment, even, to maintaining the quality of education which young people have enjoyed in our schools, in our universities.

There are many examples I could refer to this afternoon, but I'll just deal with two. My colleague, the member for Quill Lakes, will deal much more exhaustively with the education budget when he enters this debate. Though I mention two points only, the budget has a total lack of response to the Curriculum Review Commission. There is nothing — nothing! — to deal with even the most urgent recommendations of that commission. That committee said that our most urgent

need in the school system was much greater development of libraries and resource centres. Nothing in the budget to do that. Certainly, increases in school grants of the order of 4 or 5 per cent are not going to allow the boards to greatly improve their libraries and resource centres, and certainly, if we're talking about capital, there's been an actual cut in the amount of money provided for building schools. Point number one: no response to the Curriculum Review Committee's number one recommendation.

Now, I want to turn to one other instance. There's been a shameful short-changing of the universities in this budget, a shameful short-changing of not only university students, but all of us who depend upon what universities do in this society. There is an actual cut in grants per student. When I talk about cut, I mean a dollar cut. The Minister of Finance is offering somewhere between 4 and 5 per cent in university grants. The number of university students went up by more than 5 per cent last year, closer to 9 per cent, and there's every reason to believe that university enrolments will increase again.

That budget amounts to a cut in actual dollars on a per student basis to the universities. There's no recognition there at all of the need for additional space by the College of Agriculture. We all know that that has been a need for some years. It ought to have been addressed this year, not fully, but there ought to have been a commitment to proceed with the reconstruction necessary at the College of Agriculture.

Money for student bursaries is not even matching last year's demand. The clear conclusion that must be drawn is this: the quality of education will not improve. The quality of education offered our young people will not be maintained. It will, in fact, be lowered. The future of our young people, and of our province, is damaged, and the government cannot, or will not act. That, Mr. Speaker, is a major failing of this budget.

I turn now to something which received a lot of attention by the Minister of Finance – youth employment. As I've earlier noted, the budget contained what has become a feature of this government's budgets: claims of the creation of a great number of jobs – claims buttressed by programs with new and different names each year. New names, but no new ideas, and no new money.

Last year we had a program called Job Opportunities for a Better Saskatchewan. They dropped that this year, and I'm not surprised. It's pretty difficult to convince people that things are better out there in Saskatchewan when it comes to jobs — pretty difficult to get anyone to believe that – because this government's record of job creation in the last year is a dismal one, by any standards. Some members opposite say, "How about Manitoba?" If we had only had the number of new jobs created in this province that they had in Manitoba, we would have 10,000 fewer people out of work in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — I go back, Mr. Speaker, to what the Minister of Finance said in his last year's budget. Last year here's what he said. He said there's going to be 4,500 new jobs with this program, 4,000 new jobs with another program, 3,500 in a third paragraph, 30,000 weeks of work promised in another paragraph of purple prose.

Now let's look at what actually happened after all those promises in last year's budget. Now that's what he said. Anyone can read it. Anyone can read what he promised, and now we're going to find out what he did. How many more jobs do we have now than we had a year ago when he was making these promises, this 4,500, 4,000, 3,500, 30,000 weeks?

Well, let's look at the figures – and these are issued by the Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics under the aegis of the Premier, the government's own agency. From February, 1983 to February 1984, the number of young people with jobs in Saskatchewan decreased – I'll say that again –

decreased by 3,000. That's right. There are 3,000 fewer young people employed in this February than there was last February. Now those are the hard facts. They do not correspond with what we hear from members opposite, but they are what is reported by the Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics.

If we talk not only about young people, but about everybody, the record is only a little bit better. The job creation record for young and old is well below what we have come to expect in Saskatchewan. Look at the figures for February of '84 and you will find that, compared with February of '83, there are only 4,000 extra jobs. In all those years, from 1972 to 1982 – years when Saskatchewan was a growth leader, as the government opposite is kind enough to say in their brochures – in those years we were creating 9,100 jobs a year. Contrast this with the figure achieved last year, of 4,000 – 4,000 after a budget which promised 4,500 new jobs in one paragraph, 4,000 new jobs in another, 3,500 in a third paragraph, 30,000 weeks in a fourth. With all of that, they achieved 3,000 fewer jobs for young people, and only less than half of what we have come to expect across the piece. What we got was purple prose and pathetic performance.

Nor should we believe the story, endlessly repeated, that however bad things are in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan is doing better at job creation than other provinces. You've heard that one? Well, it isn't true. It isn't true, or at least Statistics Canada says it isn't true. And I am constrained to believe Statistics Canada a little more than I believe some of the members opposite when they're going into flights of imagination.

Let me give you a few facts. In fact, our performance is pathetic, not only compared with what Saskatchewan has done in past years, but also compared with what other provinces are doing now.

Over the last year, Saskatchewan has ranked number six in job creation. The way they calculate that is: figure out how big your work-force was, how much it grew, what percentage it grew. And calculating that way, we were not number one or two or three or four or five – we were number six. Five provinces did better than Saskatchewan, including, by the way, Manitoba. Nationally, jobs increased 3.4 per cent of the work-force, but in Saskatchewan it was less than 1 per cent.

Now Mr. Speaker, these are not simply statistics. They are very, very human stories – stories of real people. Let me tell you about one in my constituency. I'll call him Peter P. Peter is a carpenter, been a foreman, foreman for over 10 years, never been out of work except as a young man. I saw him last summer, in midsummer, without a job. This man was crushed. Wasn't short of money; he'd been a careful and prudent man. But he felt so strongly, "If I could only get a job for three or four more years, then I could retire not with what I'd like to have but retire with enough, and I would feel that I was retiring with dignity." We talked about the Regina Airport job, talked about whether or not he might get on there, and he said it would probably last a couple or three years and, "That just might do it for me." Unfortunately it went to a Calgary contractor, and they brought in their key people from Alberta. And so he is still without permanent employment for the first time, the first time in his work career of over 30 years.

Or take George, George R. he got a layoff notice from the Department of Highways. He'd had 19 years service, married with a family. There is no real prospect of him getting a job with a private contractor. They have their own crews – some not working even full time last summer – and he does not believe he can get a job.

It's a cruel hoax for the Minister of Highways to talk about the firing being a transfer. The minister knows that, and so does George. So does George, because he knows that this isn't the first mass layoff by the Department of Highways. There was another big mass layoff a year ago. And a year ago we heard how all of these were going to get jobs with the private sector, and they didn't. And the minister knows that, and so does George. And he knows that almost none of those people got jobs in the private sector, at least in the contracting field.

So George is going to have to start to build his life again. He simply doesn't know what he may land. Good worker, so he probably will land something. But he doesn't know what he may land, or where he and his family will be a year from now, next March, when we hear the Minister of Finance, again, tell us about, in even more purple prose, about his absolutely spectacular job creation programs.

This year the Minister of Finance was talking about these exciting job creation programs. I think we'll all forgive George if he's a little less than excited by what this government has done to him.

So I say to young people looking to land jobs – and I've been around the province, and I'm sure you people get the same impression – it's a very different province. I was talking to some young high school students in a northern town a while ago, and I asked them what they were going to do, and they said, "Well, if I get a job this summer – if I get a job this summer . . ." All I can is that for many, many years, young people in this province have said, "When I get a job this summer." Now they're saying, "If I get a job this summer." And to those people, and to others, I say this: when the Minister of Finance says, "We have created 5,000 new jobs" (as he does in his budget), I say to them: don't believe it; don't believe it. He has done nothing of the kind. He has simply said that he would create 5,000 new jobs, and, judged by past performance, there is a vast difference between what this government says about creating jobs, and the hard reality of rising unemployment that the average people of this province, the average person in this province, faces in his day-to-day life.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — It's a sad, sad commentary on this government when it can annually say to young people, "We are going to create for you 5,000, 10,000, 15,000 new jobs," and when the year is over, find that young people have 3,000 fewer jobs than when all those promises were made. I say to the government: if you can make Saskatchewan number one in creating jobs, we, on this side of the House, will be among the first to congratulate you, because we would like to see those 40,000 people back at work.

We don't believe that your policies have been effective in the past. We don't believe your policies have achieved what you said they would achieve. Last year you promised much, and delivered 3,000 fewer jobs for young people. This year you are once again promising much, but we very much fear that you will fail again, and fail because you have not addressed the real problems of employment of people, young and old, in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Since we last debated the budget, some important things have happened on the federal scene. We've seen the death of the Crow rate, and with it another big item added to farmers' costs. And increasing farm costs in the face of falling prices is the big issue on the farm today. Increasing farm costs in the face of falling prices is the big issue on the farm today.

A couple of weeks ago, and I'll quote the clipping: "Conservative MLAs from the three prairie provinces announced that the cost-price squeeze is still the most pressing issue facing farmers." And I agree with them. These Conservative MLAs said, ". . . that the cost-price squeeze is the most pressing issue facing farmers." We agree with that. These Conservatives said that, "Something ought to be done about farm fuel costs to cut down farm input costs." And we agree with that. Where we don't agree with those Conservative MLAs is that they say that nothing should be done about farm fuel costs by the government opposite, and we say that something should be done about farm fuel costs by the government opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — We call for a farm fuel reduction program of 32 cents a gallon that will provide solid help of \$320 every time a farmer filled up his 1,000-gallon tanks of farm fuel. That's a way this government could help farmers who are caught in the cost-price squeeze. The MLAs agreed that the farmers were caught in a cost-price squeeze. They agreed that something ought to be done about farm fuel costs. Now let's hear them agree that the government opposite should do something about farm fuel costs by reducing prices 32 cents a gallon.

But perhaps it is that the members opposite are no longer concerned about the problems of small farmers. There was a time, when John Diefenbaker and Alvin Hamilton led the Conservative Party, that they could claim to be the friend of the smaller farmer — and they were good people. But now, John Diefenbaker and his colleagues in battle, and all that he stood for, is under attack — under attack by the Mulroney high-rollers, who are out to get everybody who had ever had anything to do with John Diefenbaker. They're led in this province by Len Gustafson, and I hope no one is holding him out as a representative of small farmers.

But Mr. Gustafson is not the only one. Many of the members opposite are working with him to get rid of the Diefenbaker loyalists, and to get in some Mulroney high-rollers.

One long-time Diefenbaker man, Stan Korchinski, has been done in — done in by a campaign in which the Minister of Environment played a major role. I am told, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of the Environment denies it, but as Stan Korchinski says, "How naïve does he think people are?"

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — And now Alvin Hamilton is under attack, under attack by people close to the Minister of Trade, the member for Souris-Cannington. The minister will no doubt find urgent business in Upper Volta, or somewhere, when that nomination convention is held, but, Mr. Speaker, to use Stan Korchinski's phrase, applied to the member for Souris-Cannington, "How naïve does he think people are?" "How naïve does he think people are?"

We're seeing the transformation of the Progressive Conservative Party at the federal level, and we're seeing it transformed from a farmer-based party to a business and agri-business-based party, the high rollers of Brian Mulroney, a far cry from the John Diefenbaker, or a far cry from the Joe Clark party for that matter.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — It's a Bay Street, Bank of Commerce, CPR, Cargill, 10-section farmer party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — It's a party which now calls to the leadership role, farmers who have large holdings and who have little empathy with the five-quarter farmer. I don't think John Diefenbaker would like it, and a lot of average farmers in western Canada are giving it a very hard look, as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, when the government first assumed office, it exuded confidence, no doubt about that. When the government first came to office, it exuded confidence. It appeared to believe that all they needed to do was to announce that the province was open for business, and then stand back and wait for the stampede. It's difficult to credit that anyone would believe that, because all of that had been tried in the 1960s — the same sort of campaign with the same sort of slogan, "open for business." It failed in the 1960s, and I think we should assume that it would have failed today. But they believed it would succeed, and many

apparently believed with them.

A number of people all across the province hoped, hoped that we would see the burgeoning industrial development promised by members opposite. These people in smaller centres wanted to see a manufacturing plant in their town. They wanted to see a plant processing the product – of all of these, section after section of irrigated land, which was going to be brought into production.

If giving ‘er snooze by Bruce, or anyone else, would produce all this, then they were all in favour of giving ‘er snooze. Now, we’ve heard this now for two years; we’ve heard it frequently for two years, and aside from an upsurge in the sale of Copenhagen snuff and cuspudors, the results are hard to find. And those business people who were hopeful have faced the hard reality of economic recession.

Let’s take a look at housing starts. We heard lots about housing starts. But I picked up the *Globe and Mail* on March 7, and what did they say? They said:

Alberta continued to be the weakest spot in the country, with starts in Saskatchewan also weak.

This confirms what people already know in the industry, that there’s not much action in house building. Or take other building. I read in the *Leader-Post* of February 20, the results of a survey on new retail construction. I want to quote what it said:

New retail construction in Saskatchewan cities slid from 1981 to 1982, and kept sliding in 1983. The value of new retail construction in 1981, \$83 million; 1982, \$40 million; 1983, \$23 million.

And, it’s no better with respect to industrial investment. That also is going down. Investment generally, is very far from brisk. And people who intended to invest six or eight months ago have now said they’re not going to invest. A recent survey by the federal Department of Regional Economic Expansion has shown up a sharp decline in how much people intend to invest in our province. This hard-nosed realism by business people is in sharp contrast to the “rah, rah,” cheerleading we’re still hearing from members opposite.

What business people would like to have is a little less cheerleading and a little more action – a little less snooze, and a little more support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — And I want to say where I think this support should be given to small-business people. Take municipal taxes. The combined effect of low, low increases in revenue sharing – and they are low – low increases in school grants – and they are low – and the reassessment, has dealt a hard blow to some businesses, small businesses, businesses operated by Saskatchewan people. And I want to say that if people don’t believe this, you’re not talking to the same small-business men I am, because they are telling me that some of them are facing increases of 100 per cent, or 200 per cent, in municipal taxes. These business people are asking for help; help to get some school taxes off their back. That would be something you could do for small-business people, and you haven’t done it in this budget.

Or, let’s take another area that they talked to me about: out-of-province predators. As I go about this province, I hear case after case of local business people losing contracts to out-of-province contractors from Alberta and Ontario, and it’s not good enough to say, “That’s how competition works; that’s how competition works.” These out-of-province firms are often desperate. They need to keep their key staffs together, and they will bid at below cost. They’re bringing in their own employees from outside the province. They’re bringing in their employees

from outside the province. They frequently hire very little local labour. They pay no, or next to no Saskatchewan corporation tax. Their employees pay very little sales tax, no income tax in Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan business is driven to the wall. The Premier says he can do nothing. He says the constitution doesn't allow him to step in on behalf of Saskatchewan business. Well, previous governments found ways to see that, on government projects. Saskatchewan people had first crack at the job. We did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — And this government could do the same if they wished. They could do the same, but they're unwilling to do it, and I say that their policy is bad for business and bad for Saskatchewan. It's bad to have major jobs like the Nipawin Dam, constructed largely by out-of-province labour, supporting out-of-province business, rather than by Saskatchewan labour spending their pay cheques at Saskatchewan places of business.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Or, take financial help. If there's one problem that small-business people talk to me about more than any other, it's interest rates, interest rates that they think are high and uncertain. They believe that they cannot depend upon what interest rates will be in the years ahead.

Where can a person borrow money for 15 years now at a fixed rate of interest? I don't know where, but certainly not from Sedco. Certainly not from Sedco, so far as I'm aware.

Members suggest that there were no 15-year loans from Sedco in previous years. That, of course, is not true. Sedco loans used to be for longer periods. They no longer are for longer periods. What is needed is a plan that would provide money for business people at some rate of interest which was guaranteed not to exceed a top figure. That's what they need. And they know that a venture capital fund is going to do them no good, to a businessman who doesn't want to sell his equity, and most of them don't. They don't need somebody to come in and say, give me part of your business. They need someone to come in and say: look, we will offer you capital, capital for a physical plant expansion; capital for working capital at a rate of interest which will not exceed X per cent. That's what they need, and that's what they're not getting.

The government might even consider implementing the nine and five-eighths per cent loans for small businessmen that are promised in the 1982 election.

Another way the government could help, and I'm trying to be constructive here, and another way the government could help is to do something about fire insurance rates. I hear story after story that SGI is hiking premium rates for business people. Some agents tell me that SGI appears to be trying to place itself out of the market so they will indeed have to go to other companies, and I believe that's what's happening. So, obviously, if SGI jacks its rates enough, then private companies will be able to come in and cream off the business, at high rates, with impunity.

And who can deny that in many areas premium rates are sky-rocketing, and coverage is being cut back? Ask. Ask. And I see some Saskatoon members here. Ask some businessmen in Saskatoon what they are being asked to pay for the same coverage, including water damage. Ask what has happened to their premiums: up 100 per cent, up sometimes 200 per cent, from SGI. And I know that members opposite from Saskatoon will tell us if that isn't true, but certainly that's what those merchants are telling me.

Well, the constitution doesn't prevent the Premier from doing something about that. He could

put some control on SGI premium rates. There is no doubt that things are being open for business, no doubt about that, but it's not SGI business. It's business for Royal Insurance, or Prudential from Toronto.

Here again, I think what business people want it s a little less rah-rah, and a little more support.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say just a few words about justice, because I know one of my colleagues will say a good deal more about that area in the course of the debate. I should say that I would like to touch on many areas of the budget, but within the confines of one speech, one should not try to cover every base. My colleagues will certainly be pointing out what we believe to be the shortcomings in many areas of government.

Let me just say now what I say about the conduct of the Minister of Justice with respect to the appointment of judges in this province. Every citizen has the right to access to the courts, and the rule of law means nothing if a citizen can't get his case dealt with in the courts. In Saskatchewan today, the delays in getting matters to trial are lengthening, are totally unacceptable, and are clearly avoidable.

The statistics of the increasing work-load for the courts are available to all of us. Several years ago it was acknowledged that we needed two new court of appeal judges, and that's even more true today. Appeals are being delayed and justice is being denied.

The Court of Queen's Bench is pressed for the first time in my memory. Criminal trials are being delayed for three months because we don't have a judge. When the Crown lays a criminal charge, the Crown has a clear and unmistakable duty to make sure that the citizens can have a trial just as speedily as he would like. That duty is clear, and it's equally clear that it is not being discharged.

I call upon the Premier to take steps to reinstate the positions in the court of appeal, the Court of Queen's Bench, and to ask that they be filled according to law. I don't quarrel with the government seeking consultation with the federal government on suitable persons to be appointed, and I don't try to justify the conduct of the federal Minister of Justice. I do quarrel with the Minister of Justice of Saskatchewan carrying on trench warfare with the federal government and making citizens in this province seeking justice the innocent victims of those hostilities.

Justice should not be the victim of capricious clashes of prickly personality, and should not be the victim of partisan politics or quarrels over patronage. The public doesn't care whether the judges who we need were formerly associated with the Liberal party, or formerly associated with the Progressive Conservative party. They just want competent lawyers appointed as judges, so justice can be dispensed in this province as it ought to be.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say just a few words about the Key Lake spill. When we were discussing the budget a year ago, we of the opposition protested against the cuts in the Department of the Environment. You remember them. A cut in staff from 170 to 140, and no one can deny that. Environmental assessment, that branch, cut from 25 to 14, a cut of about 50 per cent. And there's a further cut this year in this budget. Mines pollution control branch, a cut from 12 to seven in last year's budget. A couple of three reinstated this year, but still below what they were before. Before the cuts of last year and this year, there were 37 people looking after those branches of the Department of Environment. Now we are going to be down to 22.

And this is not an accident. It's part of a conscious decision by the government opposite to have less environmental assessment and less regulation, a decision to rely upon the potential polluters to police themselves. Indeed, the government at its Open for Business Conference boasted that there would be less regulation. "We're going to see a good deal less regulation," they said and, in this, they were as good as their word. There has been less regulation, less checking, less

monitoring, and we all know the results at Key Lake.

At Key Lake we had the largest environmental spill in the history of Saskatchewan. Close to 19 million litres of contaminated water escaped. And what was the reason? A simple failure to monitor, a simple failure to check safety devices, a simple failure to train staff. It looks as if the installation of a device about as complicated as the valve on your toilet tank could have prevented the spill, but nobody checked. But nobody checked, and nobody was trained to take simple, fail-safe steps. And it didn't happen.

Not only did the government slash the monitoring staff, which they did in last year's budget, but they also removed a fail-safe instrument which was in the lease by which the mining company got its surface rights. There was in that surface lease agreement a committee. There was in that surface lease agreement . . . I'm told that I've lost the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake. That's pretty easy, but I'll try again.

There was in the surface lease agreement with the Key Lake Mining Company, provision for a monitoring committee. Now that committee had a number of duties, and two of them were to check the inspection reports of the Department of Environment staff, to see that those reports were being followed upon, and another duty of that committee was to check out the worker training programs. Now that's what the committee was to do. But this government doesn't believe in bothering uranium companies with petty annoyances like environmental rules, and so it abolished the committee, and therefore there was nobody checking up to see whether the Department of Environment's reports were followed, their recommendations were followed. There was no one to check up on staff training.

Now I want all hon. members to look at what the experts hired by the government opposite said about the Key Lake spill. They said that the Department of Environment reports were not properly followed up on; they said that staff was not properly trained – two of the things which the monitoring committee was specifically empowered to deal with. Committee abolished, job not done, massive environmental spill. And so, that is what has happened.

But the government isn't concerned. Why should they be concerned? After all, they believe in deregulation. They don't believe that we should be protecting our environment in the North. For want of simple checks, the government put at risk the livelihood of many Northerners, put at risk a tourist industry based upon sport fishing.

The pollution has killed a good number of sport fishing industries in other places, and it doesn't really have to pollute the actual water that the fish comes out of. If once you get the word across the United States that fish from northern Saskatchewan are polluted with radium, or polluted with any sort of nuclear waste, we have a situation which could badly damage our sport-fishing industry. That can't be denied.

So we need to pay extra attention to be able to assure people that we are absolutely scrupulous. And we're not doing that. The government isn't concerned. Its commitment to making things comfortable for the mining companies is far greater than any commitment to protect the northern environment or the fishing industry.

We believe there is public concern. We believe that public concern can only be properly put at rest by a full independent inquiry which gives to the public all of the facts about that spill. We have had some reports which tell us what the company should have done to prevent the spill. We have had no reports which deal with the conduct of the government and what it might have done to prevent the spill.

We should have a full public inquiry, and I fully agree that the public inquiry should cover the whole range of activity by the Government of Saskatchewan, from its first dealing with the Key Lake mining company, if it's felt that that's relevant. If it's felt that that's relevant.

Members opposite will be able to set the terms of reference, so they ought not to be afraid that somehow the inquiry would exclude activities of the previous Government of Saskatchewan. This is not what we're calling for. We're calling for a free and full public inquiry. We believe that it is necessary in order to restore public confidence . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the minister is not interested in this. The minister gives press comments saying how tough he's going to be and how he is doing to enforce standards and if the companies don't do what he says they are going to face fines of up to \$100,000. With a minister like that, with his record, when he makes those sorts of statements, I can only repeat what Stan Korchinski has said in another context, "How naïve does he think people are?"

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — So, Mr. Speaker, that's the real budget which Saskatchewan taxpayers were presented with last Wednesday, not fully expounded because my colleagues will have much more to say. But I have pointed out a great number of things which were in the Estimates which the Minister of Finance, perhaps not strangely, failed to mention to the people of Saskatchewan, failed to mention the lay-offs, failed to mention the staff cuts in health, failed to mention the inadequate sums for highways, failed to deal with many of the concerns of Saskatchewan people.

I know that what I have said doesn't hold much resemblance to the purple prose of the budget speech. I suggested earlier that that's hardly an accident . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, the members opposite feel, I gather, that they do not wish to participate in the debate except from their seat. But I want to say a few things on my feet, I want to say a few things on my feet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — And I want to say this: that what the Minister of Finance did in his budget speech on Wednesday was to paint a picture of the budget which bears no relation to the facts contained in the Estimates. I say that this was not by accident, but by design. We have a government in Saskatchewan today which is adept at cover-up. It wants to explain away reality. It wants to believe the press releases, and a great number of additional press releases are provided for in this budget, because we've seen massive increases in the PR votes, who wants to believe that all of their failings can be covered up by another half-dozen press releases.

But this time this did not work. This time the Minister of Highways blew the whistle on the Minister of Finance, and they were caught. The Minister of Highways, with an incredible display of callous unconcern for employees of 25-years-standing, exposed this budget for what it is, a job-cut budget. It's a budget which sees the deficit increased to dizzying heights, but still sees basic taxpayers' services cut back.

This is a budget which meets the needs of the oil companies, yes, indeed; of the bankers, yes, indeed; of the bond dealers, yes, indeed. They are going to get far more money out of this budget than any previous budget in the history of Saskatchewan. There has never been a speech, a speech or a budget set of Estimates, which yield as much to the bankers and bond dealers. But it fails to meet the needs and concerns of farmers and the small business people, of working families, of the unemployed, and the disadvantaged. And we're having more unemployed every year, and more disadvantaged every year.

It's a cold-comfort budget, one as cold as this government's concerns for people who are in difficulties. As the flippant attitude of the Minister of Highways shows, this government has no particular concern when it fires three or four hundred people. It has no concern for what it's doing for all of these families. It has no concern for what havoc this causes to families who believe that they had secure employment and a secure pay cheque after 25 years of service.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said earlier, the comments by the Minister of Highways, the comments by the Minister of Finance, which bore so little relation to reality, the comments by the Minister of Highways, who was totally indifferent to the human cost of the reality, tell us more about that budget than I could if I spoke for another hour. So I do not propose to speak for another hour, but rather I propose to move, seconded by the member for Shaunavon, an amendment, an amendment which, Mr. Speaker, reads as follows:

That all the words after "that" be deleted and the following substituted therefore:

This Assembly expresses its disgust with the budget because:

1. Combined with the PC budgets of 1982-83 and '83-84, the people of Saskatchewan will now be more than \$829 million in the red;
2. These massive deficits are not the result of government efforts to create jobs, but rather are the result of government give-aways to large out-of-province corporations;
3. It offers job cuts rather than job creation, at a time when there are nearly 40,000 people unemployed in our province;
4. It contains no adequate help for Saskatchewan farmers, who face a worsening cost-price squeeze;
5. It continues the PC government's policy of abandonment, with respect to the North and its people;
6. It offers no hope to young people that the quality of education in our province will be maintained; and
7. It contains more savage cuts in government services for thousands of Saskatchewan citizens, especially those in need.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The debate continues concurrent.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Speaker, it's indeed with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to speak on the budget debate this afternoon. I want to begin by sincerely congratulating my colleague, the hon. member from Kindersley, the Minister of Finance, for what I believe the people in Saskatchewan, and people across Canada, and people across North America, feel this was one of the best budgets that has come onto the political scene in some years. Congratulations!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — I noted with interest — and it has been a few years that I've heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition speak in this House, and on many times I've had the opportunity to follow him, which always gives one some food for his speech. And I want to say, this is the first time, I believe, that I did not see the hon. member quoting some external source that would criticize the budget. I didn't hear that today. And knowing the past reputation of that gentleman at using whatever resources he can to criticize, certainly I don't think that word I out there, or we'd have heard it. And I sat in here through the entire speech to listen purposely to see if that took place.

But I did hear something else. And it alarmed me at first, because I thought the Leader of the Opposition was taking on a new portfolio. He seems to have a great hang-up on highways. I heard him get up and just go after my fellow colleague here, the Minister of Highways. I thought what is happening? Why is the Leader of the Opposition talking about highways so much today? Then I looked behind him, and I saw the smile on the face of some of the other people that are wanting to take over that leadership. I thought, perhaps he's just trying to take away the credibility of the highway critic so that when he gets up he has nothing to say to the people of Saskatchewan. I hope that isn't true, but I wonder.

But I have to say a couple of things in defence of my colleague here. Mind you, when he gets his opportunity to speak on the budget, he can defend himself very well. But there are a couple of things that I thought should be brought to mention. The Leader of the Opposition made light – made light, about my colleague putting up a number of signs on the highways of Saskatchewan. Now, sir, you may make light about that, but I see some of those signs, and those signs are to stop traffic for children to get on school busses. I support those kinds of signs, and so do the people of Saskatchewan. You may make light if you wish.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Also, there was some indication of a bit of making light about his degree of sincerity towards safety on the roads of Saskatchewan. Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, and let me indicate to the people of Saskatchewan, that the Minister of Highways in the Devine government, the Hon. James Garner, was the person that took the lead in Canada to crack down on drunk drivers on our highways.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — And I think those are commendable things that my colleague has been doing.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition start to say something about the interest on the debt, and how it could finance nursing homes. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I thought, the nerve of the man to even mention nursing homes when he led a government that put a moratorium on the construction of them. Be that as it may, as I sat here and thought of the expenditures of the government previously and I remembered, Mr. Speaker, a sum of \$600 millions — \$600 millions, Mr. Speaker, into uranium mines that his own party voted at their convention this year that should be sold. Now, Mr. Speaker, if my colleague would have had that \$600 million, how many . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Close, close, that's right. Close, don't sell them, just close them. Write it all off. Mr. Speaker, that \$600 million would have put an awful lot of nursing home beds in to the province of Saskatchewan.

So I want to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that there are a few other things that the member opposite was talking about which I think I should refute before I tell you and the people of Saskatchewan more of the good news about the improvements in health care in this province.

The Leader of the Opposition opposite, said that there were certainly cut-backs in home care. He mentioned home care and said that he needed home care in his seat of Elphinstone. Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, that the home care district in Regina was started a month ago? Wascana really got off the ground. So, if that gentleman wanted home care services so bad, when you led the government why didn't you put it in place? That's correct. That's correct. I was at the opening just a month ago. That's absolutely correct.

You mentioned that the budget has been reduced. Let me indicate to you that the Leader of the Opposition opposite knows very well that one asks questions, finds out, and you just don't look at everything on the surface. Actually, for your information, sir, the budget of home care this year over last year has increased by 6.7 per cent – 6.7 per cent – a rather substantial increase.

And the same thing with the nursing homes. Not a 1 per cent increase, but when we get into the Estimates and get explaining this, I will show that again that is in excess of 6 per cent, the increase in nursing homes. That's the operating money, Mr. Speaker, not just the construction money which we'll talk about in a few minutes.

Mention of the alcoholism budget being decreased, I will just like to say to ease your mind, sir, you will see there are more people out in the field working for the alcohol commission. Actually, the rental of the spaces has been transferred to my colleague, government services, where it should be. Well, I guess we answered those questions.

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this: the Leader of the Opposition raised three questions and he said, "I hope the Minister of Health will stand on his feet and answer those questions." And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'm on my feet and I'll answer them right now, and succinctly and briefly.

He said, "Will there be beds closed?" And the answer is: no, there will not be beds closed. He said, "Will there be a downgrading of services?" And, again, the answer is: no, there will be no downgrading of services. And he says, "Will there be an increase in the cost to the senior citizens?" Well, Mr. Speaker, this government believes in doing things up front and centre and letting our people know what we're doing. So we instituted a system in which quarterly the increases will take place, and the senior citizens know how much the increases will be. And Mr. Speaker not only will they know the increase to their special care home, they will also receive a responding increase in their disposable income – over \$100, when the government opposite left them with \$65. So I think that's dealing up front and square with our senior citizens and our people in Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, those were the questions that the gentleman opposite asked, and I think we've answered those.

And I'd like to now go on, Mr. Speaker, to outline some of the things that we're going to be doing in health care in Saskatchewan in the coming year. Mr. Speaker, I want to say at the beginning that our commitment to health care is as strong as it ever has been, and that has been shown by the commitment in dollars and percentage commitment to health care in the recent budget. I think this indicates that we're putting the dollars where we feel that they will best benefit the people of Saskatchewan: that is, in health care and in education. What more compassionate type of government could you have, Mr. Speaker, than a government that says: we want to give ample education to the young of this province, give them their opportunity to develop their skills so that they may take part in the Saskatchewan of the future; and, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, a government that says to the senior citizens who provided the many things that you and I, Mr. Speaker, enjoy – the schools that I went to, the hospitals that my children have been born in, the town halls, all the things that we enjoyed as people growing up in Saskatchewan?

To those people who are the senior citizens today, I think the building of nursing homes, bringing in and improving home care, hospital services, chiropody and so on, is certainly a compassionate government – a government, Mr. Speaker, that shows it cares for its citizens. It's giving an opportunity for investment for those of us who are in the part of life where we can use our resources and our energy to better our life-style. But for the young ones and for the elderly, we are looking after them, and this budget reflects that, and reflects it very strongly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — In the field of health care, Mr. Speaker, we have been taking an approach by where we feel it is very important to talk to people at the local level and to work with local communities to help develop the plans to give them the facilities – to provide the facilities – that they feel they need. I want to say, the other day, Mr. Speaker, as I was announcing the special care home beds, that one of the press members said, "Well, how do you make the decisions?" And I want to tell you how we do make those decisions, Mr. Speaker. I

want to tell you.

Basically, the first contact is either through one of my colleagues or through a community who comes in to visit my office. Secondly, we go out and we visit. I personally visit those facilities. I do that for two reasons, Mr. Speaker, and I think this is very important. And I want to explain why we do that.

Number one, you see firsthand the facility and you see whether you feel it could be upgraded or replaced, or what should happen. But more important than that, more important than that, I come from small-town Saskatchewan. I go into these small towns, and I sit down with these community leaders, Mr. Speaker, and they indicate to me their needs, their desires. And one soon senses that feeling of credibility and that feeling of support and the community feeling. And based on those, along with the special care bed needs throughout this province, the decision is made where the special care homes would go. I think that is an approach, Mr. Speaker, that takes into concern the feelings of communities and is dealing up front with communities.

I want to also mention that this is quite some different, Mr. Speaker. This is quite a bit different than what happened previously when the government opposite, under the pen of a man that sat in this desk at one time and was the minister of finance until he leaked the budget, and he got dumped.

AN HON. MEMBER: — That's right.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — That's right. I remember him very well. And we have the memorandum, "We will place a moratorium on nursing bed construction."

Now, going out to talk to communities, viewing their concerns, coming back and making decisions that will result in new beds, is a far different thing than saying by the stroke of a pen, "There is a moratorium on nursing home bed construction." Our record, not counting the new five-year, \$25 million program, even in the last two years since taking office, Mr. Speaker, has put \$11.5 million into the construction of special care home beds — 190 new beds, and that is somewhat different than the moratorium.

But let me tell you about the good news that is happening from this budget on. The finance minister has announced a five-year program with total value of \$124 million. The program presents major commitment to the special care home construction in the years ahead. This tells the Saskatchewan people that the government is serious about addressing health care issues and making it the best health care system in this country.

There's three aspects to this program, Mr. Speaker. Number one, we're going to be increasing the overall supply of beds. Number two, we're going to be replacing inadequate beds. And number three, we're going to be upgrading some facilities to meet the heavier care needs of today.

Let me indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, just how many new beds this will bring about in the system. Let me indicate to you that the projects approved for this year and next year will add 277 brand new beds to the system — 277. In addition, 259 existing beds will be replaced by the same number of new beds built to meet heavier care needs.

The total construction package, Mr. Speaker, over the next two years, will be 50 millions of dollars. Well, let me indicate that this is a new approach in which we are announcing two years of construction so that local communities, again, can get their financing together, can sit down and make their plans, Mr. Speaker, to best facilitate the needs of their community. And that is a far different cry from the government opposite who, one day before the election was called, said, "Hurry up and draw up some plans for a new rehab centre." That's what happened with the other government. That was the kind of planning that went in there.

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As part of the announcement I made last Friday, Mr. Speaker, I talked about a new innovative idea which is going to take place in Saskatchewan, and that is building integrated facilities. And, Mr. Speaker, and members of this House, I know many of you are very interested in this because it touches your constituency. I want to say what the basic thought behind these integrated facilities is, Mr. Speaker, and that is that we want to keep the small hospitals viable in rural Saskatchewan, and we want to address the needs of the senior citizens in that area. Certainly we are not looking at closing these hospitals. We are going to make integrated facilities in which the hospital will remain and the seniors' needs will be addressed.

The first community to have one of these will be Lampman. And let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, they're singing in the streets of Lampman today, because they've been asking for this since 1974 – their suggestions, 1974.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — They happened to have the good sense to change the government, and a Conservative government will build an integrated facility in Lampman, the first in the province, in this coming year.

We will be inviting 17 other communities in which we feel this type of integrated facility is feasible. These communities will be sitting down and putting together plans, and we will be looking at which ones seem to be the most feasible, and there will be in addition to what I've already announced, Mr. Speaker, 85 brand new beds over the next two years in integrated facilities in Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — So, Mr. Speaker, in view of what my colleague, the Minister of Finance has said, I have just outlined to you that over the next two years you will see 362 brand new beds in this province, built either in nursing homes or in integrated facilities.

Now the Leader of the Opposition happened to mention this afternoon about mental health services, and he went through a tirade of announcements that this is cut, and that is cut and slashed, and I thought he was going to stab himself in the wrist again with that letter opener, but I think somebody in the back row has it in their pocket. So I want to deal now with the mental health services. It's another part of our major thrust in improving the health care in this budget. We said last year, Mr. Speaker, that there was a task force. A task force was brought about to assess the mental health needs, and I just want to take a minute to say why that task force came about.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Your voice . . . (inaudible) . . .

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — You know, as I travel around Saskatchewan . . . Don't you worry about my voice. You just worry about your head, fellow. Anyway, as we travelled around Saskatchewan, I heard about the Saskatchewan plan, and as it went through North America and Canada, they said the Saskatchewan plan for mental health, which was instituted around the latter '60s, was the best plan in North America, perhaps the best in the world. And as they travelled around, people said, "What has happened to the Saskatchewan plan?"

Let me tell you what has happened to the Saskatchewan plan. You know what happened to the Saskatchewan plan, Mr. Speaker, that in 1976 when our friends opposite thought they'd put about the \$600 million into uranium that they now want to close – 600 million – and they got a fetish about buying potash mines, took 400 people out of health care in this province so that they had the dollars to do that. That's what happened to the Saskatchewan plan.

So when I came into office, I see Saskatchewan mental health have put forth a study because

they're concerned, too, and I just thanked them for that. And here they were putting forth this study to see what had gone wrong in the late '70s in mental health. They came in with some suggestions. I told them last year, I said, "You come forward with your report, we'll look at your report, and we will build on that report to build the Saskatchewan plan that was once there." And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that in the field of mental health we have studied the report very thoroughly, and I'm pleased to announce the continuation of initiatives in response to the report and its recommendations.

And you know, did you hear the Leader of the Opposition say, "cuts, cut-back." Let me tell you, the package, this year, of initiatives for this year will total \$700,000, another example of this government's commitment to mental health. Now if that is a cut-back, well then I can't quite understand that.

I want to indicate some of the specifics in this package: an approved home support program; an apartment living program in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert; rehabilitation services in Prince Albert and North Battleford; expanded rehab services by mental health Saskatchewan in various locations; funds for self-help groups, the By Ourselves in Regina here, and the Crocus Co-op in Saskatoon. These initiatives, and others in the package, will expand and strengthen community support services for mental health. We will work towards the fulfilment of the Saskatchewan plan, something that I've said earlier that this NDP had sadly neglected.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure you that the money will not be used to be developing a bigger bureaucracy. Much will be going to local community groups to support programs of direct service to the public. And in keeping with the philosophy of community-based mental health services, also with the government's wish to support local organizations, and, Mr. Speaker, very important and a real change in Saskatchewan, to support local organizations and not to take them over.

Apart from the new initiatives this year, crisis-management programs, established in Regina and Saskatoon last year, will continue to develop. These programs have been very successful. The government is pleased to provide more funds this year so programs can continue to expand and progress.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate some of the directions that the Department of Health are taking in capital construction. That is the third major area. In the 1984-85 budget there is \$31.9 million provided for capital purposes. Mr. Speaker, this is an increase of over \$5 million from last year, or an increase of 20.3 per cent. I've already spoken about the commitment to construction in the special-care homes, so I won't go right back through that, although I know it's a very embarrassing point for the opposition.

There are other projects going ahead. Let me list some of the other capital projects that are taking place within health care in this province: \$10 million for the continuation of the Regina hospital regeneration program; almost \$11 million for capital grants to hospitals and health care centres – an increase of 15 per cent over last year; and, Mr. Speaker, this includes the approval to proceed with a brand-new hospital, a 25-bed hospital, in Maidstone, Saskatchewan; funds to begin planning of a new rehab centre in Regina. Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about the hurry-up the night or two before the election, saying, we have to announce the rehab centre so draw up some plans. That's just how it happened.

There was a study came in – let me see – in 1978 by the government opposite, saying we need a new rehab centre in Regina. Did they act on it, Mr. Speaker? No, they didn't act on it. They sat around. They were looking at, "What are we going to throw out for goodies in the budget?" So the night before they called the election they got word over to the department saying, "Hurry up, put some plans together for a rehab centre." Now what kind of nonsense is that? Sheer, utter nonsense and nothing else.

How have we gone about it? Let me tell you how we went about it, Mr. Speaker. We hired a consultant, and that consultant went over to the Wascana Hospital. And who did he talk to, Mr. Speaker? That consultant talked to the patients. He talked to the patients in the Wascana Hospital. He talked to the staff in the Wascana Hospital. He talked to people in my department. The parents of the handicapped came in to see me and said, "Are you going to build a new rehab centre?" I said, "Yes, we are," and I said, "There's a consultant." I said, "How be you run right down and have a talk to him?" And they did. And, Mr. Speaker, all these people – the workmen's compensation board, everyone – has been brought together into what will be one of the most modern rehab centres in this country. And it's going to be built in the next two years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Now, Mr. Speaker, anyone can understand that that's a lot better planning than saying, "Hey we're dropping the writ. Hurry up and get some plans for a rehab centre."

Mr. Speaker, addressing the needs of Saskatchewan people, I announced previously the new cancer clinic. I want to indicate that there's capital money in this budget to continue the planning and the development of the new cancer clinic in Saskatoon. And there are also funds, Mr. Speaker, to complete the construction of the new Kinsmen children's centre in Saskatoon.

The program of capital construction is reasonable and affordable, providing new, and expanded, and upgraded health care facilities for Saskatchewan people, creating hundreds and hundreds of jobs in the construction industry and related businesses.

Over the next while, Mr. Speaker, I will be announcing other initiatives in the wide range of health care items. And one example I think I should mention today – because here again was a group that had asked year after year to have services expanded to them – and I'm indicating the blind, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to say, as my colleague mentioned in the budget, that there will be expanded services and benefits to the blind in this province within this year's health budget.

I will also shortly be announcing a package of measures to address the problem of hospital waiting lists in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker – another area that will be addressed within the near future; another area where the government has looked and listened to the people, and now is taking positive action to address the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is no doubt that this year's budget for health care provides many improvements in health care for Saskatchewan people. It provides new facilities, new services, and it provides new programs.

The budget this year for health care indicates this government's commitment to strengthening our health care system. It shows the desire, Mr. Speaker, of logical planning – planning with local people, planning with the people who consume the health care benefits of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I'm very proud of the initiatives and commitments that have been brought forward by this government in the field of health over the past two years, and I'm very proud of the commitments that we've made to improving health care in the present budget.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to end by again congratulating my colleague. I have been out in the constituency over the weekend. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and I've had many phone calls from people of all ages who are very excited, very excited, Mr. Speaker, about the opportunity to invest in their own province – the opportunity to take their dollars and have a piece of the action in the utilities, or in the venture capital.

Mr. Speaker, I indicate to you, as I said earlier, when we don't hear any criticism other than the self-made criticism of the prophets of doom and gloom from across the floor – when we hear

nothing but that, where there are no credible references attacking this budget – let me tell you: I’m no prophet, but I will tell you that the implications of the budget brought down last Wednesday by Bob Andrew will have strong implications for the betterment of this province.

People are wanting to invest. They are wanting to have a chance to do it in Saskatchewan with their money, to create jobs for their own children. And you know, Mr. Speaker, what’s most important, what’s most important, they said, “Graham, we’re willing to do it with a bunch of fellows that will work with us, and to take us over after we’ve invested our money.”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — That’s the difference. That is the difference, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say, today when I listened to the Leader of the Opposition just prior to my chance to speak in this House, I can tell you that in April ’82 he was out of touch, and from what he said today, he’s still out of touch.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Speaker, there’s many areas one could talk about in this great budget. I’ve kept my comments to the area of health. My colleagues will be certainly explaining to the people of Saskatchewan who are wanting to know many of these new and innovative plans. I’m proud to support this budget. Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — I don’t know what they are expecting over there, but I hope I don’t let them down.

I want to begin, Mr. Speaker, by, of course, thanking my constituents again for the opportunity that I have to be here in the legislature and have an opportunity to participate in the budget debate. And it’s, I think, maybe a greater privilege now than it ever has been since the day I was elected in 1975. I don’t believe there’s ever been a time when I was prouder to be a Conservative because the budget, Mr. Speaker, reflects not only a forward-looking budget, a progressive-looking budget, but a Conservative budget – a budget that, Mr. Speaker, the people voted for on April 26, 1982, and a budget they now have before them, and a budget, Mr. Speaker, that they will benefit from.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I want to, at the great distress of attempting to get over the voice of the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, who seems to be suffering from a little jet lag or something, flying about. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if now would be a good time to congratulate the Minister of Finance who had to be the key person in bringing together a culmination of ideas from, of course, the premier, cabinet members, MLAs, departmental officials, the people of this province, as he was out just prior to final drafting information of the budget, meeting with people to get some final ideas for input. He has been able to take all of those ideas and blend them into one single document, Mr. Speaker, a document that reflects this government’s philosophy, a document that reflects the wish of the people of Saskatchewan. It is, in essence, simply stated, a great budget.

I had a friend ask me what I thought of the Minister of Finance now as in respect to the budget. He would have asked me generally, but I didn’t have enough time. And I said, “Well, as it respects the budget, I can only say that he is the Michael Jackson of the legislature, and he could receive, maybe, more awards than Michael Jackson if they had to compete on the same level.”

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, let me tell you very briefly what it's like to go back to your constituency with the document, the budget, in hand. I phoned up the mayor of one town and I said, "Look, I want to come out the next day. I want to have an opportunity to meet with local people and just explain the highlights of the budget," keeping in mind, Mr. Speaker, they had only heard some of the highlights over the radio and television and so on, at this point. And he said, "Well, that's great." He says, "I'll certainly put something together." The very next night I went down to this town in my riding and there were over 200 people turned out. And did I find any criticism of the budget there, Mr. Speaker? Not one word. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if my constituency is any reflection of this province, then the province will find this budget exciting. They see it as an opportunity for them as individuals to go ahead now, unrestricted.

When the Leader of the Opposition made his first comments the night the budget was introduced in the House by our Minister of Finance, he almost scared me because I thought he was so distressed he was going to slash his wrists in the House. But he was trying to indicate that it was the deficit that was the great problem and that we were hemorrhaging money. Well, there were a couple of things you could do as the Minister of Finance. You could suppress this province as it has been suppressed for 11 years under an NDP administration, and suffer from hardening of the arteries, or you could let it loose and take the lid off it and let it grow and let each person in this province progress at the rate that they, as individuals, want to. That was the direction that the Minister of Finance took in his budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've all heard of the million dollar man. Well, now in the legislature, we have the sixty minute man. The Leader of the Opposition seems to have a lot of fun with the little tricks that he attempts to pull during his initial reply in his address to the budget. I believe last year he had some bills he was waving around, a stack of dollars. And this time he attempted to take the deficit that he is so concerned about and put it into an hourly rate, or something along those lines. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not too sure what that gained, but it certainly didn't seem to gain him any coverage in the media. And I would just like to indicate that those are some figures that I want to have a little fun with in a few moments. If he wants to deal with things on an hourly basis, it is down at a level where the silly seven he has in support of him can understand. Then maybe that's what we'll do. We'll break it down into an hourly picture.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I do, I want to challenge the NDP. I want to challenge each and every member of that band of eight, full of hate, to vote against this budget, just vote against it. Because if you do vote against it, then you may well be reduced to a dangerous duo. I'm not too sure which two will survive, but it will be a dangerous duo. Because, Mr. Speaker, they never seem to get their attack consistent with their thinking. And that's very easy to understand because they don't know what they're thinking. First of all, they criticized the deficit. Then they follow that with criticizing us for not having enough money in programs, for cuts here and there. Now, how could you responsibly, and I say responsibly because they are the opposition in this legislature, and their numbers matter not, that they are few. That matters not. The responsibility is just as great, if not greater. At one time, we on this side of the House were one less than their numbers of eight. And yes, for the member of Pelly, that is seven. Now, Mr. Speaker, they need to understand that, though they're in opposition, they still have this very grave responsibility of representing the people of this province. But their credibility certainly has to be as low, if not lower now, than it has ever been, because you cannot come out one day and criticize a budget because of its deficit and the next day because of its cuts in programs, because you simply cannot have it both ways.

Now, I said I'd like to get around to some hourly rates. I've heard here now two or three times in the debate the question of the \$600 million that the previous NDP administration had invested in the uranium industry in this province and then changed their mind. So we have to assume from that, that if they were still government, they would have initially put \$600 million of taxpayers' money into uranium and then said, "Well, that's not a very good thing to do. Let's go over here and we'll put 600 million over in this other place, in some other idea."

Now, then, that 600 million, if you want to use the same way of expressing the extent of it, as the Leader of the Opposition did, works out to \$68,493 per hour — \$68,493 per hour. Knowing that a nursing home special care home bed costs about \$70,000 a bed, we could have been building a bed a day for the seniors of this province if we had the \$600 million that those people invested into the uranium industry and then changed their mind — a bed a day!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — And it's a flip-flop and fly approach; that's correct. I hear a member mention a flip-flop, and it is. It's a flip-flop and fly approach to economics. Now, if those figures aren't enough to interest you, then I'll just give you a few more, not too many. I'm just going to take five departments, and how much is this government expending since it took office? On education, about \$20,860.33 an hour; in health, \$24,040.58 an hour; social services, 21,970.79 an hour; agriculture, 4,119.33 an hour, and in urban and rural affairs, \$7,884.19 an hour.

And you're concerned about the deficit. You should be applauding the Minister of Finance and this government for the hourly injection of money into very essential areas of government — education, health, social services, agriculture, in your urban and rural areas, those kinds of expenditures. And you have the audacity to stand here and criticize this government, criticize the Minister of, try to criticize the Minister of Health, which is always a very dangerous thing to do. And I would like to again issue the challenge: vote against it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if by some strange stretch of one's imagination, and that could only happen on this side and on part of that side, one feels that we on this side had no vision of what we could be when we were not government, and the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg would do well to listen, because he sits now in opposition, and I suspect one day he would like to be in government again. And if he lives to be a couple of hundred years old, which is highly unlikely, he may well see the day when he's back in government.

But those members on this side of the House, and there's a number of us, spent considerable time in opposition. And I was speaking, Mr. Speaker, at one of my nominations, and there's been a few, but at the most recently one, most recent nomination, just prior to the '82 election.

And what did I say in that nomination speech, Mr. Speaker? And I quote. This is from a speech I made in my constituency at my nomination, telling, or at least indicating, at that time what we would be if we were government. What would a Progressive Conservative do? And I quote:

We would move rapidly towards making Saskatchewan a leader in energy production. Energy is becoming more and more vital to our future, and there is no doubt that we here in Saskatchewan can prosper from our energy development and play a vital role in Canada's future.

What has been our accomplishment in that area? That is what I anticipated that we could be as a Conservative government. Royalty tax holiday, 1983 was a banner year for the oil industry. The end of the year saw unprecedented 1,843 oil and gas wells drilled for a total investment of 322.183 million, compared to 809 in 1982. Over 100 per cent increase. Land sales amounted to 108.35 million.

What else did I indicate that we could be as a government, if we were given that opportunity? And I quote again:

That we would recognize that economic health in Saskatchewan is very dependent upon agriculture. And, recognizing the importance of agriculture, we would implement programs such as comprehensive rural gas distribution program.

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So far, Mr. Program, or Mr. Speaker, sorry, that program has been introduced, and it's bringing a service to 6,400 customers so far – 6,400.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I indicated that:

We would encourage increased productivity through capital gains assistance, fuel tax reductions, and a Saskatchewan family farm purchase program for young people who are just getting started in agriculture.

Right off the bat, Mr. Speaker, we have a \$25 per head tax deduction for every livestock that is fed in Saskatchewan for 75 days and marketed anywhere in the country. It has made, Mr. Speaker, this province the number one place to feed livestock.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — The fuel tax was done away with. The family farm purchase program has 2,500 participants. That took the NDP 10 years to do the same amount – 10 years. So, Mr. Speaker, there is no comparison.

And by the way, while I just look at the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, and I'd rather look at you than listen to you; not by much, mind you. I would just like to indicate to the member, in his comments I heard him complaining about the fact that our Minister of Agriculture wasn't going to introduce a farm rebate, a farm fuel rebate.

And I don't know why a member in the NDP would be so silly politically, because he knows right well that one former minister of agriculture which was here at one time, the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood he was at the time, came along and he took away the farm fuel rebate system. He took that away from the people of this province. And that wasn't enough that he had done that, but so did the member for Saltcoats. He used to be in here and he was the Minister of Agriculture, and he did the same thing. They just chuck it away. You know, they put it in at election time and then, after the election, they take it away again. And then you, Mr. Member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg are indicating to our Minister of Agriculture that he should bring in a farm fuel rebate program. I don't know whether you mean that he should take it away as well, like those two previous ministers of agriculture did under your administration or not, but I would suspect so if you want to follow the pattern. So I would advise you, not that I really want you to get any better, not that I worry about that, but I would advise you not to touch on that subject because it's a losing issue. It's a losing issue for the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. It's a losing issue for you, and I like it every time you get up actually, because you just sink a lot more every time you do it.

So, Mr. Speaker, getting back to what I was saying at my nomination, keeping in mind it was before the election, before transition, before we were government, indicating what I felt we could be given the opportunity. I said we would bring government closer to the people . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Don't speak now while I'm speaking. Try and hear me; it's important that you do. I indicated we would bring government closer to the people, realizing that power comes from the people, and not from the government.

Now, what have we done now, Mr. Speaker? Regional cabinet and caucus meetings are held throughout this province, and we have a Public Utilities Review Commission here in the province now. And the Minister of Health just spoke this afternoon, and he indicated the process by which he made a decision as it respects voucher care homes. He went out to the people. You know, he got in his car, and he drove right out into those communities. And he sat right down with those people that he's familiar with, and he visited with them about their needs. So when I indicated, Mr. Speaker, that, if we were given the opportunity to be government, we would take

government to the people, and we have.

I also indicated that, and I quote again, this is what I said right in my speech:

I give you my word that a Conservative government will always think in terms of real human needs. To that end, in the battle against inflation, we will create a Public Utilities Review Commission that would protect every citizen from needless profiteering by those utility agencies that are publicly owned.

That is done, and it's working. And if you want to know how it's working, roughly, if I could just go by some figures that I happen to have in my mind, it's about an average of 6.5 per cent per annum on our administration, compared to 25 per cent per annum under your 11-year administration. It's now 6.5 per cent on utility rates versus your 25 per cent per annum, and you know it's a fact. It's in the book.

I also indicated, Mr. Speaker, that because we believe everyone should have the opportunity to have a home, the Saskatchewan housing initiative program would counter the impact of high interest rates by providing low-cost mortgages for first-time home owners at 9.75 per cent.

Two programs, the Build-A-Home Saskatchewan has processed over 5,800 applicants and, of course, the mortgage assistance program. The last one, Mr. Speaker, I said at the outset, and this is another quote . . . I said at the outset:

That the dignity of man and the individual family unit must come before all else in the design of government, and that the strength of the family is our greatest treasure.

What can I say about that, Mr. Speaker, but to say that the budget is an appropriate, good ending to that story. That will bring it about. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on some health-related issues. There's not much turf left unturned, if you like, by the Minister of Health, but what sprig I can find, I will heist out of the soils. In any event, let me say this: that the medicare scare of the NDP has now become a very political damaging issue for the NDP in opposition, and I love it every time they raise it, because it's not your issue anymore, it's the people's. They have health care, the best health care that they've ever had, under a Conservative administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — What can I say to highlight the Minister of Health's speech? He got on a high line, and he never came down. But, I can say this . . . It's a billion dollar budget. And it's the first time, and, I can say this, and I envy the Minister of Health, what a proud time, and a proud moment, to be the Minister of Health — to hit that billion dollar mark for the first time — \$1,000 for every man, woman, and child. And, yes, that's for you, the member for Pelly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — This, Mr. Speaker, and I say this to the Minister of Finance now: he has put together the leanest budget in 18 years, the leanest budget in 18 years. But, did that leniency hurt anyone? No, Mr. Speaker. He was able to balance out, and as it's been said before, keeping what is needed to be kept, and letting go what was needed to be letting go. Twenty-six of thirty-six departments and agencies either held the line or decreased, to enable an increase in those ten remaining departments — essential areas like health and education. And, for that matter, and I might just pick up on that, while it crossed my mind, the Leader of the Opposition was criticizing our Minister of Agriculture for this shift from rural Saskatchewan somehow, to some myth, and that it should be noted a 20 per cent increase in the Department of Agriculture — a 20 per cent increase.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — Department of Health: a 6 per cent increase in the health budget. How does that square, to use some of the phraseology that comes from the other side of the House; how does that square with their approach? Well, I say a 6 per cent increase in the Department of Health squares awful well with a moratorium – squares awful well.

A five-year, \$25 million program, not to say anything, Mr. Speaker, of the on-going costs of roughly \$30,000 a bed. Now, Mr. Speaker, think of it. Is it not time to start, as a government, to develop fiscal and economic management on a long-term, long-range planning? That was needed, Mr. Speaker, not the short-term approach that was used by the previous administration just for election purposes. The Minister of Health and his department was able to put together a five-year program. He had the pleasure, not only to announce this year's budget in special-care homes, but next year's as well. And, I say again, a proud time to be the Minister of Health, and I time that I do envy him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BIRKBECK: — And what, Mr. Speaker, will that five-year, \$25 million program, as it respects special-care homes, do? What will it do for the seniors in this province? It will provide for 1,000 new beds – 1,000 new beds, and 500 replacement beds — \$11.5 million, in two years, has been this government's commitment in this area, and you compare that with the seven-year record of the NDP. It exceeds. We can do more in two years than they can in seven, and that's just the special care homes. We're far ahead of them in a lot of other areas as well.

Well, what's this going to tell you? This is going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when we roll around to the next election, whenever that rolls around, and I'm ready for it whenever it hits, we are going to be able to take our record in three years, or three and a half, or four, or however many years we're in office on this first term, and I will compare that, Mr. Speaker, with the previous administration's record on any count, and win.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I referred to the \$11.5 million, and I want to just indicate very quickly what that's going to accomplish. It is going to provide for local access to those facilities by our seniors. They won't have to be hustled off to some distant place to be put away – not any more. They'll have a facility in their community, close to their families, close to their families, where they should be.

Mr. Speaker, it will replace old facilities. The previous administration could not even keep up the facilities they had, let alone build new beds, so now we're having to replace those facilities. It will upgrade existing facilities to meet new and improved standards, to meet a heavier care need that we have in this province today. So that 11.5 million goes a long way, Mr. Speaker.

And finally, the Minister of Health, his departmental officials, input from the entire caucus has brought about a very innovative idea in terms of an integrated facilities program. And I want to touch on that again just briefly, because I believe, Mr. Speaker, and I say to the Minister of Health, that it's a very important program, in the sense that it will, in fact, retain and revitalize and enhance rural hospitals in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's not much more to say. As the Leader of the Opposition said, he was going to leave a few of the subjects for the members of his caucus to elaborate on. It's understanding that I would have to leave a lot more. When I first came in here I used to speak for a couple hours on the budget, and then it got less and less, and it's down to 15 or 20 minutes, and they're kind of slapping at your heels while you're up any time any more. And I'm afraid to think what it's going to be like in the next election, I may not have a chance to speak at all. Who knows?

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I just want to say that I'm in great support of the budget because it is, in fact, a great budget. Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.