

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Tuesday, March 27, 1984

EVENING SESSION

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 and the amendment thereto moved by Mr. Blakeney.

HON. MR. SANDBERG: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue where I left off before the supper break, by just reiterating some of the things that are very important to the seniors of the Saskatoon constituency. The doubling, Mr. Speaker, of the rate for Saskatchewan Income Plan singles – again of \$25 to \$50 – is certainly going to be a boon to the elderly in Saskatoon Centre constituency, as well as the couples rate from \$44 to \$75. And as I alluded to before, again a bouquet to the Minister of Health for the tremendous nursing home program that he has launched in the province of Saskatchewan. It benefits, again, the seniors of Saskatoon Centre greatly. Of course, the new 50-bed nursing home attached to the Alliance Church in Saskatoon, the renovations at Saskatoon's Oliver Lodge, the Lutheran Sunset Home will see replacement of 78 beds at their facility. And of course, earlier this year (or rather last year, it was late last year) the Minister of Health announced a 238-bed facility for the Fairhaven district in the city of Saskatoon. And that is going to go a long ways to alleviate the bed shortage in the nursing home area in the city of Saskatoon – these programs, of course, all happening in the next two years. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health also brought some good news to Saskatoon this afternoon in announcing that the Saskatoon City Hospital nurses' residence would be renovated to accommodate 25 psychiatric beds in the city of Saskatoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. SANDBERG: — This will free up 18 beds in City Hospital, which is in my constituency, for medical and surgical patients. Also the University Hospital, Mr. Speaker, will be providing a vacant ward in that hospital to allow for 10 to 20 extended care patients. This will, in summary, allow for the admittance of 1,500 additional patients each year, and will undoubtedly help to solve the current waiting list problem in Saskatoon that the former administration failed to address in the 10 years that they were in power in this province.

AN HON. MEMBER: — You can double that to 3,000.

HON. MR. SANDBERG: — Three thousand, that's a good number. Mr. Speaker, the program also, the home repair program for seniors, is a good one. Grants of up to \$1,000 will be given to seniors with incomes under \$16,500. This will allow them to stay in their homes in Saskatchewan and it's expected to help 8,100 people.

Mr. Speaker, I almost swallowed my toothpick yesterday when the Leader of the Opposition said he believed that small business offers the best opportunity of creating economic activity. Why, then, did the previous administration spend 10 years creating a climate that was totally inhospitable for business to locate in this province? Why was the attitude of business in the rest of Canada, and in the United States, that Saskatchewan wasn't the place to invest? Why? I'll tell you why: because the NDP is against business, both big and small. Free enterprise is a dirty word to the NDP. Profit is a nasty word to the NDP. But even the NDP should know that it is business

and yes, profits, that create jobs. Governments don't create jobs – big governments don't create jobs. Governments don't generate economic activity. Mr. Speaker, I know, you know, and the NDP should know that governments only operate by the good graces of what the taxpayers put in the pot. Governments operate with what business enterprises, including co-operatives, put into the government pot.

Mr. Speaker, socialism defeats itself; nationalism doesn't make any sense. The NDP paid \$600 million of Saskatchewan taxpayers' money to buy uranium mines in this province. Now they and their radicals want to shut them down. They don't want to sell them, they want to shut them down. That 600 million dollars could have been used to build hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and roads in this province. That's \$600 million down the drain.

Mr. Speaker, business will be helped in this budget by the New Venture Capital Tax Credit, and the elimination of the corporate tax for small business in manufacturing, processing, tourism, and research and development.

Another important new incentive to help in job creation is the Industrial Incentive Program. This program will provide a grant of \$7,500 for each new employee in new expanding business in the manufacturing and processing sector. Another 1,500 permanent jobs are expected to result.

And, in agriculture, the new Livestock Investment Tax Credit will bring much needed capital to that industry. Both farm and non-farm operators will be eligible, if they invest in cattle, hogs, or lambs, and market them for slaughter. To give further assistance to the livestock industry, the government is establishing a feed grain commission to assist farmers in obtaining feed grains. Feedlot operators and producers will be eligible for operating loans. And later this year, a feeder association guarantee act will be set up to guarantee loans.

Mr. Speaker, to deal with the cost-price squeeze, farmers will benefit greatly from the elimination of school property taxes on the home quarter. There will be a four million fund established to assist financially troubled farmers. There will be increased financial assistance to help farmers develop irrigation systems. As well, the Agricultural Credit Corporation has relaxed eligibility criteria, reduced interest rates, and increased the loan maximum. Mr. Speaker, our farmers also benefit from the elimination of the sales tax on electricity consumed on homes and on farms. Removal of the sales tax from these electrical bills will save residents \$5 million this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. SANDBERG: — Mr. Speaker, of course this provincial budget has possibilities and opportunities for co-operatives and credit unions in the province of Saskatchewan. In regard to the Saskatchewan Tax Incentive Programs, and particularly the Venture Capital Tax Credit Program, many of the larger co-operatives, and Credit Union Central, could set up a venture capital corporation to spin off new co-operative development opportunities. Credit union and co-operative members would then have an opportunity to invest risk capital with a significant tax break as well as an opportunity for financial gains. This program could significantly enhance future co-op development opportunities in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, processing operations in the co-op sector, i.e., CSP Foods, dairy producers, feed mills, etc., could also take advantage of tax cuts for processing firms.

Under the Industrial Incentives Program, this subsidy could assist co-ops, such as CSP again, and Federated Co-op, to expand employment opportunities and qualify for that \$7,500 payment for each new permanent job created. Credit unions may be interested in pursuing long-term fixed rate government deposits, that could be lent out to finance new and expanded businesses. The credit union system has played a leading role in financing small business development in this

province, especially in the rural areas, and I'm confident that this incentive will greatly enhance this activity.

In the area of agriculture, co-op farmers, like all other farmers, are very pleased that school property taxes on the home quarter are being removed. This will be a significant saving when all other farm input costs are rising.

Our department is currently working with potential groups of farmers interested in forming irrigation co-ops. A program of financial assistance would assist greatly in the development of new co-op ventures, where pooling of capital costs make real sense. Financial assistance and loan guarantees to feedlot operations could see the emergence of co-operative feedlots.

My department field staff will work closely with any group that may wish to form a co-operative and make use of this assistance. Mr. Speaker, many of our 37 co-op farms in this province have diversified into cattle operations on a very large scale. The introduction of a new Livestock Investment Tax Credit will be music to their ears, and I commend the Minister of Agriculture for this much needed invitation to expand cattle production in this province. Co-op feed mill and slaughtering operations could also benefit from this initiative.

Co-op community recreation facilities will also be pleased to hear that the sales tax will be removed from utility bills. The 40 co-op curling clubs, of which five are located right here in Regina, will see the sales tax removed from their utility bills. The co-op skating rinks throughout the province will all save money under this new initiative.

I applaud the Minister of Finance for introducing many new programs to assist in the employment of our youth in this province. I'm confident that many of our co-ops and credit unions will take part in the Youth Employment Entry Program and the summer Employment Scholarship program. My department will see to it that program details are communicated to the 1,300-plus co-ops and credit unions, who already employ a significant number of young people each year in this province. There are currently 276 community recreation hall co-ops in the province, and this number should be enhanced with the budget announcement that \$5 million will be available under the Cultural and Recreational Facilities Program.

And finally, I would like this House to know that co-ops do not just benefit, or have the opportunity to benefit from all the new programs outlined in this budget, but they also pay their fair share of provincial taxes, as well. Co-ops such as Federated Co-ops, Credit Union Central, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Dairy Producers, the Co-operators Insurance company, and Co-op Trust generate huge sums of economic activity, and thus the taxes they pay play a big part in programs for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we in this province are fortunate to have among the lowest power, telephone, and basic auto insurance rates in Canada. I was pleased to hear my fellow ministers announce that there would be no increase for telephone service this year, and no increase on average on the basic SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) auto licence for vehicles.

Add to this the finance minister's announcement of the elimination of the sales tax on utility bills for skating rinks, curling rinks, and swimming pools operated for the general public. This move by this Progressive Conservative government will return about \$1 million to community organizations this year.

And speaking of utility rates, Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposition has wailed about increasing rates. Let's look at the facts, if they want to listen to them. Electrical rates increased by an astounding 98 per cent in seven years under the NDP, for an average of 12.25 per cent yearly. That included a whopping 27 per cent in 1975. Compare that now with our record. There was no increase in 1982. In 1983 the Public Utilities Review Commission allowed 15 per cent. That's an average of 7.5 per cent per year. Compare the record. The numbers speak for themselves.

And Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation is not – I repeat, not – in very good financial shape because of NDP mismanagement from 1971 to 1982. The NDP raped and pillaged – yes, raped and pillaged – SPC for some \$200 million, interest included, in dividends, to fuel their lust for nationalization and power. They used customers' money for their socialist policy, i.e. to buy uranium mines, potash mines, farmers' lands, pulp mills, etc. The NDP's ultimate objective was total government control, and to rob the people of Saskatchewan of their individual initiative.

A very famous man once said, and I quote:

Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, the gospel of envy. Its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery.

Those are the words of Winston Churchill. Mr. Speaker, I want to close with a commendation to the Minister of Finance. His budget will benefit everyone in the province either directly or indirectly. He's cut the deficit by 20 per cent, he's fashioned the lowest increase in spending at 4.9 per cent – that's the lowest increase in 18 years – and he's shown a determination to make the operation of government more productive and efficient. Mr. Speaker, I support Mr. Andrew's budget.

HON. MRS. SMITH: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am rather pleased to be able to add a few comments to the budget debate tonight, hopefully some positive comments, at least from this side of the House. Perhaps I could begin by stating some congratulations to the Minister of Finance and his officials. Many people have termed it different things, including that side of the House and this side, and perhaps no further adjectives have to be put in as to the positive blueprint of the budget. I would suggest, though, that it probably demonstrated that Saskatchewan will indeed grow in social and economic terms, through what I think is a rather forward-thinking, and a very progressive plan of action presented in the House last week. Clearly the principles on which the budget rests emphasizes that we are at a turning point. I would suggest to the opposition tonight that the turning point started almost two years ago in April, and now we've turned the last corner, and that is indeed refreshing.

Mr. Speaker, if one looks at how the budget was put together, that in itself is refreshing. The pre-budget consultation process that took place with the Minister of Finance is, to a very large extent, reflected in the principles on which that budget is based. The government has shown that keeping in touch is unquestionably a responsibility of good government, and that only by keeping in touch can it truly be responsive and sensitive to the needs of Saskatchewan people. That has been a good lesson for government, and in turn it has been a good lesson for the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, if I could touch on Swift Current constituency for a minute, as it relates to the budget. I know that the constituents are pleased with what they heard the other evening. I have only to look in the paper, and I read some comments, such as, "The Venture Capital Program is an excellent idea."

AN HON. MEMBER: — Who said that?

HON. MRS. SMITH: — The past president of the chamber of commerce. And then there was the issue of stimulating the livestock industry. That was also perceived as being very positive.

Then we have the gentleman that said, "The \$7,500 per new permanent jobs created may be just what companies need to give their businesses a fighting chance." And someone else went on to say, "The deficit doesn't bother me much. It will not have a great effect on the economy. If we get working together we can work our way out of debt, but employment is the key." And that is one of the keys in the budget. And perhaps the person that said, "Employment, research

development, and tax incentives are positive because they appear to be helping small business. We think small business is important," says it all for what the people of my constituency think of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, the budget displays a very unique blend of economic development, social priorities, and investment strategies, strategies that are essential for the development of communities such as the one that I represent. It recognizes the need of small business men, the importance of agriculture, and how other major sectors of a diversifying economy can be integrated into far-sighted programs. And perhaps it is the diversification that is the key. It is no longer simply one of only government – and big government – doing it.

The budget is also sensitive to the needs of its citizens, including the sick, the young, and the elderly. And let's look at just a few examples. For instance, the Minister of Health's budget: new hospital construction, measures to reduce waiting lists in Saskatoon, funding for ambulance services, chiropody, and even preventive programs such as the Lifestyle awareness program. And it probably deserves worth repeating. As a consequence, health expenditures exceed the \$1 billion mark in 1984-85 for the first time ever.

On another topic, Mr. Speaker, the youth will not go unnoticed in that particular budget. One only has to look at the success of last year's program to know that this year's summer employment program for youth will be equally as successful.

And our seniors, what is there to say? We know it's one of our severe problems, one of the most severe problems facing government when you look at the changing demographics, but they are going to benefit again. An additional 6 million allocated to expand the number of long-care beds. We also have a new Senior Citizens Home Repair Program being introduced.

And the increase in benefits under SIP, the Saskatchewan Income Plan, from \$25 to \$50 for singles . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member from Shaunavon says, "How many will get that?" Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 20,000 people in this province that live below the poverty line that are going to have access to that – 75 per cent. Seventy-five per cent of those numbers are women, living below the poverty line. He seems to be making the dichotomy that if there aren't enough numbers then why bother to go to the trouble for the program. The member knows very well that seniors, for years, have been asking for an increase for single seniors to bring them up above that poverty. Now that's it been done, he says we shouldn't do it. Perhaps he should make up his mind which way he's going on it.

Mr. Speaker, the budget clearly shows some imagination – imagination in Crown corporation reform, Venture Capital Tax Credit, industrial incentives, Livestock Investment Tax Credit, removal of the sales tax on electricity, rebates on property taxes. I'm sure the member from Assiniboia will apply for that one. And we have mining and tourism, and the list goes on.

Let me turn to my portfolio, Mr. Speaker, Education. Interest in education has always been high, not only for parents but teachers and trustees and, hopefully, the public in general. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce tonight that Saskatchewan, joined only by Ontario, has the largest percentage increase in operating grants for schools, at 5 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, we had some discussion in this House today on this 5 per cent, and the formula, issue of it came in with it.

I suggest that the opposition are trying to, once again, mislead as to the actual dollars that are going in to education. Perhaps what we should be doing is reminding them of some of the factors that go into the formula to make up that 5 per cent. We have enrolment, capital debt retirement, transportation, your rental, your tuition fee expenditures, and they know that. There are at least two members on the opposition side that were at one time a minister of education.

Along with the 5 per cent increase on the operating grants, Mr. Speaker, you will see a 9 per cent increase in special education. You will also see a substantial increase in the correspondence

school budgets, and the school for the deaf. If you wonder why the correspondence school, as I'm sure my critic is, opposite, perhaps it can better be defined as good planning. Mr. Speaker, we have seen an increase in the use of the correspondence school. Given the fact that 72 per cent of the schools in Saskatchewan have fewer than 100 students, it becomes imperative that we plan for the future, utilizing the technology that is before us, and that is why you will see an increase going into the correspondence school, greater utilization of the correspondence section, and in return, a better quality of education at the local level for those children that do not have access to the program there.

Mr. Speaker, funds will also be allocated to curriculum, particularly in the areas of driver education, computer education, and the health and social services curriculum. There is another area, Mr. Speaker, that will see an increase, and that, native education. My colleague, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, will be talking more on that. But just for some examples of the increase: in native education will be a 5 per cent increase to both NORTEP (Northern Teacher Education Program) and SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program), two native teacher education programs, as well as \$100,000 allocation to an Indian and native education development fund.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some criticism, and it is about the only criticism that has been relayed in dealing with the curriculum review. I look back on yesterday's *Hansard*, and I see where the Leader of the Opposition has one comment, two comments, to make. Number one is that there has been no response to the Curriculum Review Committee's number one recommendation. Mr. Speaker, I think that needs some clarification. Number one recommendation by the curriculum review is that the proposed set of goals be adopted and be educational goals for Saskatchewan. The other, Mr. Speaker, was not number one.

If the Leader of the Opposition and the members opposite would take time to read the curriculum review report they would see what the recommendations are and what the implementation plan is, and that's very key to the long-term planning for the education system in this province. So I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that before the criticism come further, that they do read it, and that they read it a second time, particularly the page on the implementation time. It will serve you well, I assure you.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn to another issue of the women's secretariat, and what the budget has done for women. If there was ever a trade mark of the former administration, it was the lack of consultation, communications, and co-ordination of activities with their various ministers in respect to their departments. And certainly, when it came to women's issues, that was no exception.

Well, Mr. Speaker, under this government we have a women's secretariat. It is charged with the legislative responsibility of ensuring that women's concerns and views are incorporated into government policies and decisions, and that groups and individuals have a focal point within government to which to voice their concerns. In assuming this responsibility, the women's secretariat is working co-operatively towards policies, programs, and legislation which will benefit all people in general. But it has also taken the understanding and the co-operation of the various ministers that are responsible for those departments, and I thank them for that.

Under this year's provincial budget, you are going to see an allocation of some \$298,000 towards the women's secretariat for the work with other government departments. The women's secretariat, in doing some co-ordination on various issues were able, through the various departments, Mr. Speaker, to address the issue of family violence. And the member from Regina Centre laughs. It is a problem, family violence. There will be a new program to address the problem of that violence against women, which will be announced in early April.

Initiatives from several government departments will be incorporated into the new program: services for the family; training and procedures for those who provide services to both victims

and offenders; data collection methods to understand the extent of the problem; and a program for increased public awareness of domestic violence. And the importance of the family will also be included.

Looking at the budget, Mr. Speaker, and the effect on women: while we have the family violence, we also have the issue of senior women living at the level of poverty. That has been addressed once, and it bears repeating. Seventy-five per cent of our seniors that are living below the poverty line, Mr. Speaker, are women.

You will also see an income for the family income plan in the budget, an increase that goes towards working parents, the majority being single women.

Along with that, Mr. Speaker, there is the issue of day care and, as the Minister of Social Services has said, a 9.5 per cent increase.

Turning to another priority of this government, when it comes to the women's issues, has been one of training and employment opportunities. Mr. Speaker, you will see some very positive initiatives taken on behalf of the Department of Advanced Ed and the Department of Social Services with their welfare reforms.

That, Mr. Speaker, is some of the items related to women, and the effect that the budget has on them. Between those various programs, such as the women's secretariat, the Department of Education, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest, while the budget has been new and fresh in terms of economic development, it has also identified very real human needs, and it is for that reason that I will be supporting the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Unfortunately for the Minister of Agriculture, it is not going to be read. Some of the comments which I have, have been bypassed by some of the events in recent days. I want to begin, however, by congratulating the Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — It is always an honour, Mr. Speaker, to hold the office of Minister of Finance and be given the honour to deliver the province's budget. In this case, I think I would be remiss, as well, if I didn't give him credit for the rather game way he tried to defend the indefensible, for his tenacity in the face of an impossible task, that of trying to put a decent face on the way this government has handled the province's finances.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — When this government took office, this province's affairs were the best-managed in North America. The economy was booming, the public were filled with the spirit of optimism, and now all of that has passed. This province seemed like a promised land, and all of that has now passed. To attempt to put a good face on your record over the last couple of years is, indeed, a courageous act.

A damning indictment of this government's record can be found in a publication issued by this government, the *Saskatchewan Economic Review* . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There seems to be some subliminal discussion going on here, Mr. Speaker. Some of it, not so subliminal.

As many members will be aware, the *Saskatchewan Economic Review* has been published at the end of the year, for many years, under successive provincial administrations. It's found to be . . . It's heavily dependent on statistics from Statistics Canada, and since this data isn't available before year end, it is up to date as of December 31, 1982. There are some editorial comments

about 1983, but not a complete statistical picture. Some of the comments, I may say, are misleading and I would particularly mention those of the Premier who goes on to state, flying in the face of the facts contained in the document, that this province has not participated in the recession.

What I propose to do is to examine four major topics: Saskatchewan's economic performance up to 1981 under the NDP administration, our economic performance in 1982 and '83 under the Conservative administration, our future economic prospects. As the many statistical figures and tables in this economic review make clear, the Blakeney government's fiscal and economic policies produced broadly based, steady growth for the Saskatchewan economy and for the Saskatchewan people. In a record which this government can only envy, the fundamental indicators for the province rose steadily during that period. Steady and rapid growth in our economic performance through 1971 to 1981 indicates that, throughout that period, the policies of the NDP government led to real growth, significantly higher than the national average for Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Let's look at investments in the economy. Table 21 at the top of page 17 has something to say about investment. You can see through the table that public investment rose steadily and at a rate which considerably exceeded the rate of growth of investment in Canada through that decade. When this government took office, the rate of investment declined.

Let's look at the number of new jobs created for Saskatchewan. Although table 9 at the upper left-hand corner of page 13 . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Ned, we didn't participate in the recession.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — No, the member for Prince Albert has it wrong. We participated in the recession; it's the recovery we seemed to have intentionally passed by.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Table 9 shows that in 1978 we created 8,000 new jobs; in '79, 15,000 new jobs; 1980, 8,000 new jobs; 1981, 9,000 new jobs. We will get in a moment to the number of new jobs created in the oil patch. Seasonal fluctuations in employment are inevitable in a northern economy. When the NDP were in office, there was no need to play games with figures, and to suggest that, during the summer from May to October when the unemployment levels of absolute jobs increased, we were creating 1,000 jobs a month; we were really doing it. The only way this government created 1,000 jobs a month was to count the seasonal fluctuations. And, of course, we heard very little about the 7,000 or 8,000 jobs that they destroyed in the months of October and November.

Let's look at employment growth in Saskatchewan's manufacturing sector. Table 27 at the top of page 19 demonstrates a steady growth in employment in Saskatchewan's manufacturing sector from 1972 to 1981, particularly after 1977. The point I seek to make from these four examples . . . And I could have selected virtually any table in the *Saskatchewan Economic Review*, which would have showed the economy of this province in the '70s grew faster than the national average. The point I seek to make is that, under clear, sound, economic development policies of the NDP, the years up to 1981 saw steady, broadly based growth, rapidly increasing job opportunities, and a steady improvement in the standard of living of ordinary people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — We were elected. The member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg will

remember that we ran on a platform which declared our firm intention to develop Saskatchewan resources in a manner which would benefit Saskatchewan people. We succeeded, and our success ushered in a decade, the hallmarks of which were high growth and an increasing prosperity.

Let me pick a couple of disparate income groups just to illustrate that the prosperity was broadly based. I pick, as one representative occupation, teachers. I use this example because I spoke to teachers. The member from Saskatoon Mayfair, who is not in his seat right now, might remember that. I think it was a good deal less pleasant for him than for myself. We both spoke to the same group.

As was the case with most occupational groups, teachers participated in these broadly based economic benefits. From 1971 to 1982, the average teachers' salary increased from 8,700 to an average of 29,000, an increase of 230 per cent. During the same period, inflation increased by 138 per cent.

Let me pick another group, some might say at the other end of the economic scale – orderlies, housekeepers who worked at hospitals. I spoke to a group of hospital workers last Friday, so I remember those figures. The average wages of orderlies increased by 300 per cent during that ten-year period; the average wage of housekeeping aides in hospitals by 400 per cent. The prosperity, Mr. Speaker, was indeed broad and deep.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — I might add, for the benefit of the Minister of Education, that during that period there was a 5 per cent increase in the number of teachers, even although the student enrolment declined by 3 per cent. There was some modest increase in the student-teacher ratio.

In a decade which is growing increasingly complex, we need to redouble the resources which we commit to education. We need to improve the quality of education and not impair it; we need to improve and lessen the student-teacher ratio. As is the case throughout this administration, the government is heading in the opposite direction of what is needed. Student-teacher ratios are on the upswing. Teachers are one of many groups saying, Mr. Speaker, "There is so much more we were, and so much more we could have been."

Having quickly reviewed the economic performance up to the time of the last election, I'd now like to look at the period of time since the last election, 1982 and 1983 – the period of time when we, according to the Premier, chose not to participate in the recession. Canada had actually begun to experience severe recessionary pressures in 1981. Those pressures, related, of course, to high interest rates, soon produced a frightening full-scale, national recession, starting in 1981 and continuing on into 1982 and 1983.

In Saskatchewan, a clear, responsible vision of the future, and sound, determined policies enabled us to keep the recession at bay in 1981, and during 1981 we swam ahead of the tide. But 1982, Mr. Speaker, brought into office a different provincial government, with radically different priorities and policies.

Let's look at the consequences of the different Conservative policies implemented and pursued by the present government, and let's just look at the same four indicators we looked at before. Real gross domestic product, which, as I said, during the 70's grew faster than the national average, during the first two years fell, also fell faster than the national average.

The Table II, on page 35 of the same document shows that during those two years Canada suffered a 4.4. per cent decline in real economic growth, but that Saskatchewan did worse – 4.6 per cent. Judging by that indicator alone, it would indeed appear that Saskatchewan did choose to participate in the recession. Indeed, we led the country into the recession. The recession in

Saskatchewan was worse than the national average.

Those cold statistics illustrate what is felt with a chill on the street and in the countryside throughout this province. The member from Saskatoon South, who has not been known to wear out his copy of the economic review, might try it. It's got some interesting reading in it.

AN HON. MEMBER: — It's your review.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — You might be interested. The member from Saskatoon might be interested in the statistics from Saskatoon. You'll find out that Saskatoon did worse than Regina. That's because Saskatoon bore the full brunt of the brilliance of the open for business approach. Regina did not bear it. The cold statistics illustrate what is felt with a chill on the streets and the countryside throughout this province.

Fear of losing a job, lack of any opportunity for young people, and many others who are not so young, are the overarching characteristics of this age. Indeed, I see trade unions who struggle, in some cases militantly, to improve the lot of the people they represented, as is their responsibility, now meekly accepting very low wage increases — sometimes zero per cent; sometimes they accept a cut. It is not that you people or the captains of industry have found any magical formula that eluded us. It is that you have put an all-pervading fear of losing their job into the workers. And it is that fear that enables you, and your friends in industry, to wrangle the very low wage settlements you have.

I say to members opposite though, people do not necessarily vote for those they're afraid of. They are more likely to hate those they're afraid of. By instilling the workers of this province with a fear, you will indeed reap a bitter harvest at the time of the next election.

Let's look again at Table 27. Again we see that employment in Saskatchewan's manufacturing sector fell in 1982 after several successive annual increases under the economic policies of the NDP. There are, in fact, Mr. Speaker, two ways of measuring Saskatchewan's economic performance. We could compare our performance, the performance during this administration, to the performance during the decade which the NDP were in office. Or we could indeed, as the member from Prince Albert suggests, compare ourselves to rest of Canada. I propose to do both; I propose to do both.

This document issued by your Minister of Finance — graced on the front page by the Premier, who tells us we have chosen not to participate in the recession — released, I believe, by the Minister of Finance, if I recall correctly — shows that during 1982 and 1983 our performance did not stack up well against the years in which the NDP were in office. During that period we experienced a decline in real growth. In 1982 and '83, we experienced a decline in investment, a sharp increase in unemployment, a decline in motor vehicle sales in 1982, a further decline in 1983, decline in building permits in 1983, decline in employment in the manufacturing sector . . .

But not everything was in decline, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Bankruptcies were up.

JMR. SHILLINGTON: — That's right. Sharp increase in bankruptcies in both 1982 and 1983, during a period of time when bankruptcies in Canada have been on the decline. They have not in this province. We are, indeed, Mr. Minister, number one. We have indeed become number one with respect to bankruptcies. We have, as well, a tragically large welfare case-load, and I intend to speak about that at more length in a moment. But the most recent figures from the provincial government are for November, 1983, when there were 13,248 employable people on welfare. One year earlier, there had been 11,758. Back in the halcyon days of 1981, two years earlier, there had been a modest 6,300 people on welfare. In other words, the number of people on welfare has more than doubled in the past two years.

AN HON. MEMBER: — That's employable people.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — The number of employable people, that's right, have more than doubled. But members opposite prefer not to compare their record of performance with the period of time in which we were in office. And, given the sharp contrast, one can understand that. Members opposite, indeed, prefer to have the record when they were in office compared to that of other provinces. We are told that we are number one. Let us see if these comments bear any relation to the facts. Let us examine our economic performance in 1982 and 1983, and let's compare it to the rest of Canada. We have already noted from this economic review that our real economic growth fell by 4.6 per cent in 1982, compared to 4.4 per cent for the whole of Canada.

Let's look at some other key comparative indicators. Consumer and Corporate Affairs reports that in 1983 the number of bankruptcies in Canada declined by 10 per cent, but the number in Saskatchewan was 15 per cent higher. Up 15 per cent in Saskatchewan – down 10 per cent in Canada. Statistics Canada reports in the past 12 months, January to January, employment growth across Canada has been 3.8 per cent, but only one-quarter of one per cent in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan, therefore, ranks number eight in terms of creation of jobs – 3.89 per cent across Canada, up only one-quarter of one per cent in Saskatchewan. We are not, Mr. Speaker, number one; we are not number two; we are not number three, four, five, sic, or seven. In terms of job creation, we are number eight.

Then again, we do not trail in all areas. Statistics Canada reports that, over the past six months, Saskatchewan has consistently had a higher inflation rate than the rest of Canada. As the public well knows, this is due in large part to utility rate increases imposed upon us by this government.

As I said, it's not the recession we didn't participate in, it's the recovery we seem to have not participated in. That's because we now have a different government, with different priorities and different policies, and its different "open for big business" approach. The policies and specific decisions of this government, and of any provincial government, have indeed made a difference. And our economy and, I suppose, most important of all, we have suffered the consequences.

The future prospects for this economy, Mr. Speaker, would be good if we had a government in office able to give some leadership. Obviously, we have fundamentally a strong base in agriculture, in resources, and in other areas. Our prospects are bright indeed if this government would pursue sound policies to be of broad benefit, and not to benefit just a select few. Given the history of this government, that's a pretty big "if." If this government would begin to show some economic leaderships instead of vacillating indecision, if the Conservatives would begin to acknowledge and assist small businesses instead of focusing only on big business (I'm going to return to that theme). Indeed, the whole approach of open for business is a call for outsiders to come to Saskatchewan and do the job for us.

Apparently we are unable to develop our own economy. The call must go to foreigners to come and do the job for us. Not only does that lack confidence, but it is contrary to our entire history. When we have called on outsiders to come and do the job for us, as the government of Premier Ross Thatcher did – indeed, they had the same motto – when we have called upon outsiders to come and do the job for us, it has failed miserably. When we have decided the job of developing this economy is our job, to be done by Saskatchewan people, then we have succeeded grandly, as we did under the CCF in the '50s, who took over a bankrupt province, and as we did during the '70s.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Our prospects would be bright indeed if the Conservatives would stop the unsound and irresponsible tax giveaways – more than \$100 million a year to the oil companies alone. If this government would cease, Mr. Minister of Labour, giving away the

markets of the potash corporation of Saskatchewan to foreign-owned companies; if this government would begin to implement policies which are fair and just, instead of reflecting a double standard; if this government adopts sound and equitable policies, then I believe Saskatchewan's economic prospects are bright indeed. Not just for a select few, as is the case under this administration, but for the likes of hospital workers, orderlies, and housekeeping aides.

Finally, there are, I think, three conclusions to be drawn from this sorry record of Conservative mismanagement. Firstly, because of the radically different provincial policies over the past two years, Saskatchewan economy and Saskatchewan people have fully participated in the recession. Instead of pursuing sound, equitable policies, the Conservatives have abdicated leadership. Their vacillating, their exclusive focus on big business, their neglect of the historical strength of our people, small businesses and the working families have brought misery, suffering, and a dim future.

Provincial governments, Mr. Speaker, do indeed make a difference. The second conclusion I might draw is that if the economy had been as rosy as the Premier and the Minister of Finance had been telling us, we would have expected some improvement, instead of the rather dismal budget that was presented.

We would have expected some beginning towards the long-promised abolition of the sales tax. We would have expected some beginning towards the promised 10 per cent reduction of income tax. We would have respected a reasonable, real increase in the necessary programs in education, social services, and health, and no further program cuts.

My final conclusion is that the Saskatchewan economy is sound, but susceptible, perhaps, to bad management. If we are to prosper, if we are to find increased prosperity together, to enjoy better facilities in education and social services and health care, then we must move beyond the narrow focus of pandering to big business. We must pursue new policies in the mid-1980's and beyond, which will enable us together to build a better Saskatchewan for ourselves, our children, and our neighbours.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to utter a note of complaint about the rent controls – a new subject for me, I might add, one I have not ventured on before. I have not ventured on before. I want to complain in the most vigorous terms about the manner in which the announcement with the respect to rent controls was made.

The timing of the announcement, Mr. Speaker, was calculated to be a few days after the session had adjourned. The minister well appreciated what a storm her announcement was going to make – what a storm her announcement, the abandonment of tenants to the vicissitudes of a zero vacancy rate. She may have showed bad manners in a parliamentary sense. No one could argue with her judgement that these rent controls were going to be bad news for tenants, and would be seen as such.

I want to remind the House that on Friday, December 9, and Monday, December 12, I asked the minister about rent controls. I'd like to remind members present that she did not avail herself of the opportunity to comment on these rumours, and did not avail herself of the opportunity to make an announcement.

On Wednesday, two days after the House had adjourned, the announcement that we all knew was coming was delivered. Looking at this, with the advantage of hindsight, one can only conclude that the minister was intentionally delaying the announcement of her change in policy until after the House adjourned.

The minister may have been discourteous in the extreme, but one has to admire her prescience. She accurately anticipated how unpopular the abolition of rent controls would be. She well knew the impossible position in which she had placed tenants. She knew her actions would not withstand the sort of scrutiny that this Chamber provides, and which, in a democracy, the public

are entitled to expect from government policy.

The program, I may say, by way, I suppose, of a congratulatory note to the minister, is operating every bit as bad as she evidently anticipated it would. Landlords are raising rents with impunity. If it's necessary, they're kicking tenants out to raise the rents. Landlords did not take long to realize something that I suppose this minister will claim never to have known, and that is that there are no controls on a rent in a suite when a tenant changes. She denies the obvious – that the bargaining position of the landlord and tenant are not equal. If a tenant complains, the landlord may simply ask him to leave. The only remedy of a tenant is to go through a time-consuming and nerve-racking process, whereby a tenant disregards a formal notice to quit, and makes the landlord get an order of possession. And that is the only procedure available.

The young, the vigorous, those who may move, may tempt fate and go through this procedure; the old, the poor, the timid, will not. This program, Mr. Minister, is not fair to tenants; it is not fair to landlords. There is a 5 per cent guideline which many landlords, being honest folk, will abide by. Unfortunately, this program, Madam Minister, punishes the honest and rewards the guilty, because there are no controls. There is virtually no way of enforcing the 5 per cent guideline.

I want to touch upon a few other areas, if I might. I want to express a note of concern about the further downgrading of the Department of Labour. This, I may say, after a brutal paring in 1983-84, when there was a 17 per cent reduction in funding and a 19 per cent reduction in staff. This year, of seven subvotes with staff, four of those subvotes have staff decreases. Mr. Minister, I wonder when you got that thunderous applause which you received at the last convention of the federation of labour, I wonder if it was because they anticipated that there would be further reduction in pension benefits and, I may say, further reductions in occupational health and safety. Occupational health and safety, Mr. Minister – the Estimates suggest they have been combined with occupational health enforcement. The fact is, the division has been abolished.

This department, Mr. Minister, is a travesty and a tragedy at the same time. Mr. Minister, the role of the Department of Labour is supposed to be to look out for the interests of working people. The role of a department is not to create a favourable climate for business. You, Mr. Minister, are not in the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources. Those departments are being ably destroyed by the ministers who are in them; they don't need the benefit of your brilliance. Your role, Mr. Minister, is to speak on behalf of the interest of working people, not to take away the rights of the working people to create a favourable climate for business.

I want to say a note as well about the women's secretariat. The spending in the women's division under your tender mercies, Mr. Minister . . . And we know that the women's division was important to you, because you were the minister that told us that you were in favour of women you married. With the benefit of that depth and that understanding, the spending, Mr. Minister, while it was in your tender hands, was \$811,000. Now, Mr. Minister, it is one-third of that.

The Minister of Education, who is the minister in charge of the women's secretariat, avoided meeting with women's groups who were here three or four weeks ago. They came to the Legislative Building, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wanting to see some ministers. None were available. The Minister of Education, however, was available the same day to do an interview in her own office, trying to explain to the press why she wasn't present.

The grants to women's groups, have been cut, I calculate, to one-fifth of what they were. I went to the Public Accounts for the 1982-83 year. I believe that there was \$75,000 in grants to women's groups. No doubt, because of the warm reception this government has got from women's groups, they cut the grants to women's groups by one-fifth of what they were. That, I suppose, is the penalty that they pay for trying to bring to your attention the needs of women in areas like day care, like minimum wage. That is the price they pay, I suppose, for demonstrating on the front steps of this building.

The women's secretariat was, we were told, administrative of a co-ordinating role. We said it should have an advocacy role, and this budget is proof that it should have an advocacy role. It is unfortunate that the women's secretariat didn't take some time to explain to the Minister of Social Services why we need an increase in the funding of day care, and not a decrease.

I was present, as was the Leader of the Liberal Party, about a month ago on the steps of the legislature, and met with some demonstrators who were demonstrating the lack of funding in day care. What they had hoped for . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, the member from Riversdale makes a comment from her seat. I might remind the member from Riversdale she was invited to be there and chose not to. I might remind her that she was invited to be there and chose not to. We will look forward, Madam Member, to your contribution, and your comments on the women's secretariat when you have an opportunity to speak. Those women who demonstrated in favour of day care were not – were not – expecting day care funding to be cut, but it was.

I want to make a comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the office of the Provincial Auditor. The member from Kindersley, when he was just the member from Kindersley, was also chairman of the public accounts committee, and when in opposition spoke often of the need for increased staff in the Provincial Auditor's office, and I may say I agree with those comments. I did then, and I do now. In 1972, when this government took office, there was a staff of 72 – 72 in 1982-83. That decreased to 67 the next year, and this year we find has decreased to 66. That is in sharp contrast to what is needed, and that is in sharp contrast to what the present Minister of Finance said he would do. I have little wonder at why the government does not want its affairs scrutinized. When you set upon the process of destroying a professional public service, as this government has done with its continuous firings, and when you replace career public servants with party war horses, then you can expect chaos. Governments today are far too complex to be run by amateurs, and that is what you are attempting to do, that is what you are attempting to do. When I went through the Estimates on Social Services, I noted that the poor were in for some hard times. They were not intentionally passing by the recession; it was happening in spite of their best efforts. I noted in the Estimates there were staff cuts in nine of 10 subvotes with staff components. I noticed the social assistance plan, the money available to be distributed to . . . (inaudible) . . . had decreased by 6 per cent, this in spite of the obvious fact that the welfare rolls continue to increase, as people who had unemployment insurance fall off the year's end and go on welfare. I wondered, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Speaker, how they were going to make it up, how they were going to make less money go further.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Free enterprise.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — Yes that's right, free enterprise for the poor and socialism for the rich.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — I see by a document issued . . . to be issued, I gather, tomorrow, by the Minister of Social Services, that these are indeed hard times for the poor. When I first heard about this at noon today, I frankly did not believe that any government could be so heartless as to implement . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no I didn't believe it. It was incredulous, not shock. I did not believe that any government would be so harsh and cruel as to do what I see this government doing.

It's even more surprising . . . The document issued by the Honourable Gordon Dirks, Minister of Social Services, outlines some sharp reductions in social welfare benefits – some very sharp reduction. Apparently, apparently the . . . and I'm going to talk about, in a moment, about who's on welfare and where the increased people on welfare are coming from. You will excuse me if I

use another of the documents issued by this government while I do so. But for the moment, let's find out what has happened to the single welfare recipients who are almost entirely employable people.

The single people without, without dependence are almost entirely the unemployed employables. The Minister of Social Services, in the document which was available today, outlines a stunning 42 per cent cut in the benefits for single employable people on welfare. Today, a single employable person on welfare receives \$511 a month for the first three months, then an additional \$85. That will now be \$345 per month – a 42 per cent reduction in their benefits. I wonder how on earth this government expects welfare recipients who are the victim of a government's mismanagement, how they expect welfare recipients to make such a sharp reduction and a sharp adjustment.

Even more surprising coming from the Minister of Social Services. He seems to read a different version of the bible than was available to me because I thought we were told to go and feed the poor, not starve them into submission.

The benefit restructuring is even more stunning. The benefit restructuring is even more stunning. You know what you do if you get a toothache and you are on welfare? You now wait six months to get it fixed. You get a toothache and you are on welfare, you wait six months to get it fixed.

Room and board – the amount available for rent has been reduced from \$300 to \$200 and I wonder how many members know what you rent for \$200 in a city, size of Regina. I can tell you, because a good deal of them are in my riding, and they are not fit for man nor beast. That's now all that's available to these single employable peoples who want nothing more than to go back to work. The next item I see could only have been done through malice. There cannot be a significant amount of money in it.

Casual gifts. This again is a document that issued by cease, surprise, and wonderment on the face of government members. It's coming tomorrow. Be patient. The Department of Social Services tomorrow will be reducing the amount of a casual gift or prize from \$1,200. There's not a significant amount of money in that, that is just mean spirited.

Perhaps the cruellest, the cruellest cut of all deals with cash and liquid asset exemptions. Cash and liquid asset exemptions has been reduced from \$5,000 to \$3,000 for people with dependants. Do you know what that means to the widows with dependent children who live in my riding who have saved money . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — . . . for university for their kids . . .

MR. SHILLINGTON: — . . . for university for their kids . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — . . . they have to spend it now.

MR. SHILLINGTON: — I seem to have an echo here. They have to spend it now. They have to spend the \$5,000. That may well be the cruellest of them all. That may well be the cruellest of all. And who's on welfare these days? Well I recommend to members opposite the *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* issued every year. I may say, when I penned those comments, this document was not available.

It shows in a Table on page 2, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . I assume that these Draconian measures are an attempt to force the lazy off welfare. I assume that that was what you thought you were doing. But as the chart shows, those seeking work, the numbers have not changed at all. It's a straight line that runs right across the track. The increases in welfare come exclusively from people who want to work, are looking for work but can't find it because of this government's mismanagement. But you haven't even stopped there. You have made it more difficult for them

to find a job because you took away the bus passes, so that now there's no way to get around and look for work.

I know that this government thinks it's good politics to beat up on those on welfare. Just as this government thinks it's good politics to beat up on trade unions and intellectuals at the university; you people have obviously decided that it's good politics to beat upon universities. There's no other explanation for the behaviour of the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower. You've obviously decided it's good politics to beat up on trade unions. There is no other explanation for the behaviour of the Minister of Labour. Obviously thinking it's good politics to beat up on those on welfare, there is no other explanation for this document. I say to you that there will come a day of reckoning. That may be – all of that – the war on trade unions, the war on universities, and the war on social service recipients may go over well with the rednecks in your party, but I'll tell you there is going to come a day of reckoning in time for the next election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — I say that you are writing off some seats. You are writing off some seats. I look forward to the discussion of this by the minister tomorrow, and I do look forward to the opportunity to discuss this in his estimates.

I want to mention a couple of other departments before I sit down. One is Justice. One of the problems in the Canadian justice system ever since Confederation has been patronage in the appointment of the judiciary. At the time of Confederation, that was a common phenomena throughout western democracies – patronage appointments to the bench. That was common. It has disappeared in most advanced countries, with one exception, one notable exception – that's Canada. We have not managed to rid ourselves of the patronage system of appointing judges.

What is the role of the Minister of Justice in this whole sorry mess? The role of the Minister of Justice is to seek to inject a provincial element of patronage to aggravate the federal patronage. In the process, he is wreaking havoc on the judicial system in this province.

Cases are . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I want to be a lawyer, and I want to have cases of my clients heard within a reasonable period of time, and that, now, cannot be done. That, now, cannot be done. I say to the Member from Rosthern, the last criminal appeal I put before the court of appeal, the man was incarcerated. It was an appeal against a conviction. If the appeal had been successful, he would have walked out of the courtroom a free man. He had to wait seven months for a criminal appeal in the court of appeal. And the Queen's Bench is degenerating into the same sorry mess. We need more judges, not less. We need to rid this province, and rid this country, of patronage and judicial appointments. We do not need provincial patronage added to the federal patronage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — I want to mention one other department, and that is Supply and Services. I noticed in Estimates this year the amount being spent on leased space is up by 14 per cent. I do not know the source of that rather remarkable increase in the cost of leased space, but I suspect it is the same problem as afflicts the professionals of the public service, and afflicts the Court of Queen's Bench and the court of appeal – it's conservative patronage. You are granting leases to your friends at exorbitant rates. And that accounts for an abnormal increase in the cost of leased space.

Capital spending, on the other hand, is down. At a time of high unemployment, when you can get bargain-basement prices for building, you choose not to. The typical Conservative government reacting to problems rather than providing leadership. My colleague in this caucus

and in the city of Regina, the member from Elphinstone, spoke of a new attitude among young people. They no longer say, "When I get a job, I'm going to . . ." They say, "If I get a job, I'm going to do such and such.

That is the legacy which Thatcherism, Reaganism, and Conservative politics have bequeathed the younger generation. There is a good deal more that we could have been. We could have increased public spending; we could have done things that need to be done. Not this government – they chose to hide everything you have under a bushel in case it gets worse. And if this government stays in office, it's going to get worse. My final words are to the trade unions, the universities, social welfare recipients, the young who are looking for work, the older people who are getting precious little help. I say to all of those people: be patient because a day of reckoning will come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SHILLINGTON: — And when that day of reckoning comes, they will have an opportunity to restore an equitable government and prosperity to this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — The member for Athabasca.

MR. THOMPSON: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to beg leave of this Assembly to introduce some guests.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — The member has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. THOMPSON: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you, and to the other members, the town council from the northern village of Ile-a-la-Crosse, headed up by their mayor, His Worship Matt Gardner and councillors, Tony Durocher and Max Morin and also the manager of the local radio and television station, Bucky Belanger. I would like you all to welcome them here tonight. They're in town meeting with provincial and federal officials, and I would like you all to welcome them here.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE) (continued)

MR. TUSA: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to rise this evening to enter into this budget debate. A budget, Mr. Speaker, which I had a great deal finding words for it. The reason, Mr. Speaker, having gone to the best available dictionaries that one could find, the budget is so good that there aren't words to describe it, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity . . . Mr. Speaker, rather than me talking about the budget itself, and rather than me making comments, let me refer to the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Speaker, and use this as some indication of the things that the people are saying about this year's budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What date was that?

MR. TUSA: — Mr. Speaker, this is the day after.

AN HON. MEMBER: — The day after?

MR. TUSA: — Correct. Mr. Speaker, I have read many reports by the *Leader-Post* about budgets for many years but never, ever, have I heard any budget talked about in such glowing terms. For example, “The budget that Finance Minister Bob Andrew brought down last night . . . was a masterful piece of work.” Here are the words of the Minister himself, a man with great compassion and understanding for the people of this province. On the night of the budget the hon. minister said:

The response of some may be to cut back programs and raise taxes in a single-minded drive to eliminate these deficits. In our view, this would produce neither confidence nor stability. We cannot expect to foster enthusiasm and a sense of common purpose by cutting the programs that people rely on for their health and personal security. And major increases in personal income tax or sales tax can only dampen the recovery.

Let me quote a few more, Mr. speaker, a few more headlines. There it is, Mr. Speaker, “Health Department budget over 1 billion dollars”.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Isn't that something? That's the *Leader-Post*?

MR. TUSA: — That's the *Leader-Post*, “Senior Citizens Benefit from Budget.” “Six Point Program Designed to Create More Jobs.” And we can go on and on. “Relief Given on Utility Costs.” “Savings Bonds Plans Unveiled.” All excellent programs by the Minister of Finance and included in his budget. Mr. Speaker, this budget, which was brought in a few days ago, built on the budget of 1983 and establishes a foundation which will assure the Saskatchewan people of a Progressive Conservative government for years to come. Since we have become government, Mr. Speaker, new initiatives have been taken to minimize the impact of the recession on Saskatchewan residents. For example, minutes – minutes – after becoming government, we eliminated the gas tax, Mr. Speaker, the largest single tax cut in the history of Saskatchewan, and I repeat it so that the opposition members do not forget.

Job creation measures – job creation measures have been taken which has resulted in unemployment rate being the lowest in Canada at an average of 6.1 per cent, while at the same time, Mr. Speaker, our labour force has grown. Indeed, our labour force has grown. For generations, indeed, going back to the '30s, the only thing that didn't grow was our population. The NDP hon. members, who rules this province for about 35 years, kept the unemployment rate low by exporting the young people from Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that we have kept the unemployment rate low, while at the same time the children are coming back to Saskatchewan. Small wonder, Mr. Speaker, small wonder that the Conference Board of Canada has predicted that economic growth in Saskatchewan will again outstrip the rest of Canada.

Many other initiatives have been taken to help the people in this province. Housing. Prior to the election one of our main promises was to bring mortgage interest relief to people suffering from high interest rates. We found, when we became government, interest rates at a high of 18 per cent or more and moved quickly to bring in a mortgage interest reduction plan. This has benefited 43,000 homeowners. We went one step further and helped the people of Saskatchewan to own their own homes, since we as a party, and as a government, believe in the fundamental right of citizens to own their own homes. Consequently, quickly we introduced a Build-a-Home program which offered a \$3,000 grant. More than 6,000 people took advantage of this program and benefited.

And this year, Mr. Speaker, we will be introducing a rental incentive program. This program will

stimulate the rental unit construction and bring relief to those people renting apartments. Because of the compassion of this government, this program will be targeted to rental accommodation for low-income earners such as senior citizens, young clerical workers, the near elderly on low to moderate incomes, and young married couples and single parents.

Mr. Speaker, we have also taken steps to lower the cost of living. I have just mentioned the fact that we removed the gasoline tax and that, Mr. Speaker, saved hundreds of dollars for the average driver in the province. May I remind the people of Saskatchewan, the members of this House, and particularly the people in opposition – the members in opposition – that if government had not changed, the people of this province would be paying 49.2 cents per litre or \$2.23 per gallon for gasoline. I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that because government changed we have the lowest gasoline prices in Saskatchewan – the absolute lowest – at approximately 41 cents a litre or \$1.86.

I find interesting that since I got elected to this House I have consistently heard the NDP criticize us for removing the gasoline tax. I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the next election, when I expect the hon. members opposite will put their beliefs where their mouth is, and they will have included in their platform for the coming election that they will immediately put back the gasoline tax as soon as they become government.

Utility rates, Mr. Speaker, is another area where the hon. members have misled the people of Saskatchewan with deceitful utterings. And let me give you one or two examples. They have these cute little ads in the newspapers of Saskatchewan. “Have you been touched lately?” the ads say. Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan were touched lately, but not recently. Let me go on to explain that: “lately” meaning prior to April of 1982. This is the way the hon. members opposite treated utility rates.

In the seven years of former NDP government, electrical rates were raised 98 per cent, for an average of 14 per cent a year. Natural gas rates, Mr. Speaker, in eight years was raised 200 per cent – 200 per cent, Mr. Speaker – for an average of 25 per cent a year. Mr. Speaker, yes, the citizens of Saskatchewan have been touched lately. But more recently, they have been treated justly. Since becoming government, electrical rates under the Progressive Conservative government have risen only 7.5 per cent per year, and natural gas rates, Mr. Speaker, have been raised only 6.5 per cent per year. However, the best is yet to come, and not only is it to come, it has, in fact, arrived.

This government took over Crown corporations, which were mired in debt and mismanaged. In two short years, Mr. Speaker, this has been turned around, and that has been evidenced by the string of announcements which were made recently. Sask Tel, Mr. Speaker: the hon. member responsible for Sask Tel, announced that there will be no increase in Sask Tel in 1984.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TUSA: — That’s recently, not lately. Natural gas, Mr. Speaker: the hon. member responsible for natural gas and energy has announced that there will be no increase in 1984. Sask Power, Mr. Speaker: Sask Power rates will be kept under control, with less than a 5 per cent average increase in 1984. And SGI, which was in debt to the tune of \$54 million, Mr. Speaker, has announced recently that there will be no increase in 1984.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to elaborate somewhat on our natural gas distribution program. This is a promise which we made to the farmers of Saskatchewan, and to the small urban communities which did not yet have it. We promised them that we would begin immediately to deliver natural gas to all the small urban communities in Saskatchewan and to the farmers of this province. And that we have done. Since 1982, 80 communities and 4,451 urban customers have received the benefits of natural gas. And rural Saskatchewan – there have been 104 rural

projects resulting in 2,340 rural customers. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood has benefited from this very, very useful program. In 1982 the village of Markinch received the benefits of natural gas. And in 1984 – in this year – the rural areas of Southey, Markinch, and Cupar will receive the benefits of natural gas, and will begin saving money to the tune of about one-half the cost of heating oil.

Mr. Speaker, Progressive Conservative policies in Saskatchewan have indeed made this a good place to work. And let me give you one or two examples of that. The government's oil industry recovery program, 1983, saw all records broken with 1,843 wells drilled – an increase of 128 per cent from 1982. At the same time, land sales yield the province \$108.3 million in revenue, up 218 per cent from 1982. What did this mean to the economy, and to those seeking work? This meant the creation of 1,000 new jobs in the oil industry, plus hundreds due to the spin-off activity. Natural gas: in 1983 there were 150 gas wells drilled in Saskatchewan compared to nine in 1982. That was an increase of 1,666 per cent. We've had other job creation mechanisms. Opportunities '83 provided 4,300 students with jobs. Small business employment program, which gave a \$5,000 tax credit to small business who would create a permanent job, benefited 3,500 employees in this province, and a Saskatchewan jobs program, an additional 3,500 jobs.

Agriculture also played a very, very significant role in the economy of our province, as it always does. It goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that agriculture is the rock of our economy. As agriculture goes, so goes the province. You recall, Mr. Speaker, prior to the election we solemnly promised the people of Saskatchewan that we would move immediately to abolish the land bank and to bring in the farm purchase program. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. members opposite, that as I campaign on the farmers of my constituency, the single greatest worry farmers had was how to pass the land from one generation to the other – how to pass the family farm from one generation to the other. Many times, many times, they would say that the land bank is not serving the purposes intended, that the land bank is simply a tool for the state ownership and the enslavement of the people of Saskatchewan.

They responded most favourably to our plan to bring in a farm purchase program, and accordingly elected a PC government. Since 1982, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that 2,500 farmers have benefited from the farm purchase program. Of those 2,500 farmers, half of them are transfers from father to son or daughter. In other words, the program is serving exactly its intent, its intent being the transfer of land within the family unit. One thousand two hundred and fifty such transactions took place since the inception of the farm purchase program. We anticipate that in 1984, a further 1,350 will be enrolled under this program.

Nursing homes was another area we have moved quickly. Under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, \$7.2 million were spent over a period of seven years; and indeed, as we all know, there was a seven-year moratorium on the construction of new nursing homes. Under a Progressive Conservative government, in two years we have committed \$11 million to the construction of nursing homes. Prior to 1982, Mr. Speaker, in five years, the previous administration made provisions for only 140 nursing home care beds. In the two short years that we have been government, we've made provisions for 190 nursing home beds.

However, Mr. Speaker, we realize that that is far from adequate; and consequently, in the recent budget, the Hon. Graham Taylor, the Minister of Health, has made the following announcements. He has told us that in the next five years, \$25 million will be spent on nursing home construction. This will result in 1,000 new beds being built, and the replacement of 500 others, for a total of 1,500 beds in five years, Mr. Speaker – 1,500 in five years, as compared to 140 under the NDP in five years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TUSA: — Mr. Speaker, we have also taken into consideration the senior citizens of our

province. The senior citizens who built Saskatchewan, who through their hard work and pioneer efforts have made a province for us that we can truly enjoy and live in freedom. Taking that into consideration, and trying to show our respect and our appreciation for what they have done in the past, we have introduced two very significant programs. One significant program is a Senior Citizens' Home Repair Program. This will be a five-year, \$20 million program, which will allow senior citizens to receive up to \$1,000 for renovations to their homes. This will assist senior citizens to stay in their own home for some years longer.

The second major plan we have brought in, or improved, is the Saskatchewan Income Plan. In 1975, the former administration introduced the Saskatchewan Income Plan. At that time, they paid senior citizens who qualified \$20 per month, and in the following years they only increased that by a meagre \$5 per month. This year's budget, Mr. Speaker, breaks significant new ground in our determination to make certain that senior citizens live in dignity. Consequently, our Saskatchewan Income Plan will be revised as follows: the single's allowance will be doubled from \$25 to \$50, and the couple's will go from \$45 to \$75.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I would like to make a few comments on education in Saskatchewan, and may I say that education has been in good hands. The Hon. Pat Smith has indeed shown the people of Saskatchewan a common sense, intelligent approach to educational problems in this province. Therefore, two years ago, there was introduced in Saskatchewan a two-year review of the K to 12 curriculum. This review has now been in the hands of the minister, and in the hands of the people of Saskatchewan.

However, since we made a commitment to the people that we will keep in touch with their wishes, no decisions will be taken until they, themselves, are not consulted. Consequently, a public discussion will take place throughout the province; people will be invited to come and make representations to the minister and her colleagues; and it will be the advice that we receive from the people of Saskatchewan which will determine the direction of education in Saskatchewan into the year 2000.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the average per pupil grant to school divisions increased by 7.8 per cent in 1983, allowing school boards to limit average mill rate increases.

The 1983-84 Capital Building Program financed 104 school construction and renovation projects, worth \$73.6 million, and I am pleased to say the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood once again benefited from our forward-looking progressive education policies. The following communities received renovations or additions: Lipton, Dysart, Southey, Bulleya, and Strasbourg, Mr. Speaker. The 1984 education budget will once again see communities in Last Mountain-Touchwood benefit. The communities of Earl Grey and Semans will both receive significant moneys, and will both receive significant additions and renovations to their schools.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I would now like to turn to the area of Indian and native education in Saskatchewan. I would like to comment, Mr. Speaker, on some of the areas and some of the work that is done by the northern education branch.

The northern education branch is what you might call the re-educational region of Saskatchewan. It carries out the following functions which are similar to the southern regional areas. It carries out teacher in-service activities; consultation with boards of education and their staffs with respect to administrative and instructional matters; capital projects, reviews, and prioritization; co-ordination of special education services; mediation role, assisting in the resolution of differences between and among boards of education, local boards of trustees, parents, and teachers; and special assignments and investigations.

However, in addition to those duties, Mr. Speaker, the northern education branch office performs these functions: contractual staff, such as speech therapists, guidance officers, school psychologists, language and reading specialists are employed to provide direct assistance to

special education programs. The special northern educational opportunities grants – funds are made available to certain programs, and are administrated by the northern education branch. A superintendent supplies superintendent services to Ile-a-la-Crosse, Creighton, and Uranium City. Mr. Speaker, furthermore, northern boards now handle capital projects in the same manner as their southern colleagues. And may I say that the communities of Sandy Bay, in northern Saskatchewan, and Cumberland House will receive significant improvements to their schools due to the 1984 education budget.

New initiatives to assist northern education have also been taken. The NORTEP program, Mr. Speaker, which is a program to educate Indian and native teachers, the NORTEP program has begun a four-year degree granting program for teachers. This program is co-ordinated with the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. Graduate teachers from this program now receive the same certificates as participants in the Regina and Saskatoon based program. This program, Mr. Speaker, is a very important program, as it provides Indian and native teachers in the northern schools, which, as we all know, have predominantly Indian and native students.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has also brought in new initiatives. The Indian and native education development program will be funded to the tune of \$100,000. The purpose of this program is an incentive program in that, stimulating and supporting the development of native education programming in Saskatchewan school divisions. This program will pursue the following objectives: one, it will stimulate the development of native education programs in Saskatchewan; it will employ qualified natives in school divisions; it will improve native retention and student achievement; to increase the capacity of rural divisions; to develop native programs; and to increase native parent and community involvement in education.

The target group for this program, Mr. Speaker, any school division which has a high native enrolment and is not presently receiving funding from Saskatchewan education for native programming is eligible to apply for funds. The program has a potential of reaching 8,000 treaty Indian students and 5,000 non-status Indian and Metis students, for a total of 13,000 students. In terms of schools, there are 131 schools which have an enrolment population which is composed of more than 15 per cent. Half of these schools are rural, and half, urban.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to comment on SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program), from the SUNTEP program. This year in 1984-85 will mark the expansion of the program to a four-year program in Prince Albert. The SUNTEP program is a program designed . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — By the New Democratic Party.

MR. TUSA: — Correct.

This is a program designed by the former administration and carried on by our administration to turn out native teachers through our urban schools. It's a very important program and I'm pleased to say that in 1984-85 the SUNTEP program is located in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, will have a total of 180 students. May I comment also on the Saskatoon survival, Native Survival School. In this school the curriculum places an emphasis on native culture and values with an eye to building self-identity. The curriculum is designed to help students develop the skills necessary for coping in society. It also encourages participation by native parents. And I'm pleased to say that I visited that school, and the board of directors is all a native board of directors.

Furthermore, the native curriculum development provides \$126,000 in school grants to help school units develop curriculum which can accommodate the native content in their schools.

Mr. Speaker, before closing I would like to speak informally on the consultation process which

has been going on in Saskatchewan since January. Some time ago, the Minister of Education and myself felt that native education was very, very important in Saskatchewan. We talked about some of the initiatives that had been taken in this area and discovered that, while many studies have been done, no one in the past has gone out for some grass roots input from the people. Consequently, it was determined that I would strike a committee and tour the various schools in Saskatchewan, to go out to the people to get content from the grass roots of Saskatchewan.

This process, Mr. Speaker, has been in progress since January 1984. I have gone all over southern Saskatchewan, to many, many schools, starting out in Carlyle and going to other communities, such as Lestock and Loon Lake, just to name a few. I've had a total of about 75 meetings in southern schools and have literally met hundreds of people.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our grass roots approach, I have met with the grass roots people in each of these communities. In other words, I have met with those who are either directly involved in, or touched by, the education system.

Who are these people? Students, parents, teachers, local boards, and division boards. In every community I have gone to, Mr. Speaker, I have met with representatives from the students, representatives from the parents, representatives from the teachers, representatives from the local boards and the division boards. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that in all my deliberations there has been one common theme as I spoke with all these people, the common theme being their willingness to listen, and their willingness to attempt to improve the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I also had the opportunity to spend several days in northern Saskatchewan in communities such as La Ronge, Pinehouse, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Sandy Bay, Cumberland House, Creighton, La Loche, and Buffalo Narrows. Mr. Speaker, once more, in 35 meetings in the North, I met with parents, with teachers, with students, and board members. Mr. Speaker, the one revealing item that I found, whether I travelled in the North or the South, was the hospitality in which we were received. Everywhere I went, Mr. Speaker, I was told that it was just about time that somebody came and talked to the people who know what's going on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote some quotations from people I spoke to. A parent, Mr. Speaker, said:

I am particularly pleased that you have taken an interest in carrying out a consultation with grass roots. This is a process that is long overdue.

Here's what a school unit director had to say:

Me and the board enjoyed our discussion about native education. May I congratulate you on your sensitive insight into this very important area of education.

And here was a principal, Mr. Speaker, whom I had never met before, but whom I was very pleased to have met – a very intelligent individual. This is what he had to say:

Thank you for your and your committee's visit to our school. Please feel free to come back at any time. You will always be welcome and we will assist you in any way we can.

That, Mr. Speaker, typifies the responses we received in all the communities that we went to. In the coming years, Mr. Speaker, we will continue our efforts to make certain that Saskatchewan's people continue to receive the best education in the country.

Finally, I would like to once again commend the Minister of Finance for a budget which lays the foundation for prosperity in Saskatchewan for years to come. This is a budget which once again

recognizes the individual and the youth. The youth, Mr. Speaker, are often said to be alienated. This alienation has been brought about by the debilitating effects wrought on society by the pursuit of Fabian socialism as it is epitomized by the bankrupt ideas of the disappearing NDP.

The philosopher Bertrand Russell once said:

If life is to be saved from a boredom that can be relieved only by disaster, some means must be found to restore individual incentive and initiative.

Russell maintains that the ultimate value of life must be sought in the individuals of society, not in collectivism. Unfortunately, the modern welfare state, which is so enthusiastically espoused by the socialists, leaves little room for personal idealism. It silences all dreams, and dooms man to live out his days in life's grey areas. Consequently, it stifles the creative energies of our young.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, recognizes the damaging effects on mankind, on the young, and on society, when the dreams of the individual are sacrificed on the altar of collectivism. I commend the minister for crafting a budget loaded with incentives, and recognition for individuals. In short, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget which, to follow an ancient Chinese saying, will "let a thousand flowers bloom." Therefore, it will be my pleasure to support the main motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure and honour to be able to rise in this Assembly this evening to reply to one of the most positive, the most impressive, the most articulate, and the most progressive budget that, I would suggest, has ever been delivered to the people of Saskatchewan. And I want to congratulate my colleague, the member from Kindersley, the Minister of Finance and his staff for their efforts and determination to make this province the most progressive area in Canada, in spite of the recessionary times that we are all facing here in the province, in Canada and, indeed, the world.

I find it just incredible, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP members opposite would try and turn a positive budget into a negative document. They have destroyed their own credibility with the people of Saskatchewan as they have done time and time again since April 1982. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition stood up in this House on budget night, and being a mathematical genius that he claims to be, proceeded to tell the people of Saskatchewan that the deficit budget will cost the people of Saskatchewan some \$11,000 per hour. And he is not telling the people of Saskatchewan the entire truth. \$800 million deficit – every jurisdiction in Canada has a deficit, and I would suspect that every state in the United States has a deficit. And the member opposite should tell the residents of this province some of the real facts – some of those facts the NDP may not wish to reveal to the public.

Let's look at the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. In eight short years the NDP prior to April 30th, 1982, accumulated a \$1,240 billion – not million – billion dollars deficit at Saskatchewan Power. And, Mr. Speaker, this breaks down according to the Leader of the Opposition's formula, as follows: on \$1.249 billion that's an annual interest rate of \$139 a year, or \$380,822 a day, or \$15,868 per hour which he evidently thinks is all right. And the Leader of the Opposition has the nerve to question the provincial debt of \$800 million which is all the province, and is happy with \$1.249 billion of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation which has 3,000-some-odd employees.

It reminds me of the well-known television commercial. Give the opposition a credit card and they will never leave home without it. What is so incredible about the Saskatchewan Power deficit is the NDP did not tell the people of Saskatchewan about it. Mr. Speaker, they had the nerve and the gall to stand up in this House and rant and rave about Saskatchewan power rates. Let's look at the Saskatchewan power rates. The NDP administration, prior to April 1982,

increased electrical and gas rates substantially over the past seven years.

Now, let's look at the power rates that the NDP brought in. Let's look at 1975 – 1975 was the election year, and it is very, very strange, Mr. Speaker, that the rates came in in August, after a June election.

And let's look at the gas rate increases in 1974: for the residential, 47.2 per cent; for the general service 2 commercial, 51.0 per cent; GS 3 commercial, 51.7 per cent; GS 4, 44.5 per cent; and the large industrial sector of our province had to face a 100.6 per cent increase.

Power rates, the same year, all in August, after the June election: 25.6 per cent for residents; 20.6 per cent for SG 2; 26.0 per cent for SG 4; all across the board to the farm sector, where they went 34.8 per cent. In 1978, another election year, but no increases until after December when the election was over.

Mr. Speaker, the rates under our government, on an average, since the election, has increased an average of 8.23 per cent for power, 4.3 per cent for gas. And even with those increases, Mr. Speaker, those increases were approved by the Public Utilities Review commission, which is the group that is put together by the people of Saskatchewan, represented by the people of Saskatchewan. And our cabinet and our government had no say whatsoever in what the rates were going to be.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite do not understand that the people of this province come first, not the politicians. And the NDP members were delivered that message in April of 1982, when they were turfed out from government in the province of Saskatchewan.

There is one more item that I would like the people of Saskatchewan to understand, Mr. Speaker. The previous administration helped themselves to a huge amount of money from Saskatchewan Power. I would hope that the members opposite will sit quietly and listen to the following numbers. Over a period of 1967 to 1980, \$105 million was tripped from the Saskatchewan Power Corporation and put into the general account.

And let's look at some of those numbers. In 1972, \$20.9 million was taken from Sask Power; 1975, 3.6 million; 1976, 10.2 million; 1977, 8.2 million; 1978, 10.3 million; 1979, 16.5 million; and in 1980, \$10.3 millions.

The members opposite helped themselves to this massive \$105 million from Sask Power to balance their books, and now they try and tell the people of Saskatchewan that the Progressive Conservative budget is not a true and fair budget, and for the first time in history of Saskatchewan we sit with a deficit budget. Not true, Mr. Speaker.

All I can say to the members opposite is this: the Progressive Conservative government of Saskatchewan delivered an honest and innovative budget, and not an NDP budget where they took from the Crown corporation of Saskatchewan Power over \$105 million, and put the funds into the government bank account in order to make their budgets balance so that they would look good before the eyes of the public. Mr. Speaker, that does not wash. The people understood what they were doing in April of 1982, and today they now know all the facts about Sask Power and how the \$1.240 billion deficit occurred.

I ask this House and the people of Saskatchewan only one question, and that question is simply this: who has been up front with the people of this province? Certainly not your administration, sir, prior to April 1982. This government has a deficit budget, we all agree, but the province of Saskatchewan is on the move and the reasons, Mr. Speaker, are very, very simple. Government co-operation with business and the people of this province has proven to be a combination that will move this province far ahead of any province in Canada.

There is plenty of proof already on the books, and I will list some of those policies, Mr. Speaker, that have people looking at Saskatchewan as a place to come and live and raise their families. First, in 1983, while Canada suffered a national unemployment rate of 11.1 per cent, Saskatchewan consistently had the lowest rate of unemployment in the entire nation – 6.1 per cent.

According to the Leader of the Opposition, he says 5 per cent unemployment should be considered as total employment in the province, and if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, we are pretty close to the magic numbers. And with the excellent job creation measures introduced in the budget, the creation of some 19,300 jobs in 1984 will have a tremendous impact on the employed numbers in this province. Why is Saskatchewan on the move, Mr. Speaker? I said there are many reasons. Let's look at the removal of the gas tax. The members opposite can joke about the gas tax, but it is a true fact that the removal of the gas tax helped the people of the province, and there is proof of that. Just ask them, Mr. Speaker. If the NDP's 20 per cent sliding tax on gasoline was still in effect, the price of gasoline in the province of Saskatchewan today to the consumer would be \$2.23 a gallon. Under our government, the current average price of gas is \$1.86 a gallon, or 41 cents pre litre. That's why the people want to live in this province. The removal of the gas tax alone put \$122 million back in the pockets of the Saskatchewan consumer, and that is for one year, and it will go on, year after year after year.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, I am sure, have taken the time to go through this budget – and they have gone through it, and through it, and I am sure that they are having a very, very difficult time trying to find a problem with it. So what do they do? They hang their hats on the deficit.

Maybe they should hang their hats on the \$105 million they stripped from Sask Power. Maybe they should hang their heads in shame after forcing Sask Power into a \$2.9 billion deficit. Maybe they should hang their heads in shame after allowing \$1.8 million of worker days lost over the last 12 years, not to mention the wage loss to the employees involved. Maybe the NDP should hang their head in shame after spending \$600 million of taxpayers' hard-earned money on uranium mines, another 500 on potash mines, when that one-point-odd billion could do a lot today to help the unemployment, and the people in need, and the nursing homes for the seniors, and so on.

Then, at the NDP convention just recently, they decided that the mines should close, and that we should declare a moratorium and phase out the uranium mines. Mr. Speaker, this comes from the members opposite, and they want to criticize this government's latest budget. It is really, really, very hard to believe. I think the people of this province spoke up in April of 1982, and now the people know why the province of Saskatchewan was a have-not province. The previous administration made Saskatchewan a have-not province. Under the leadership of our Premier, Grant Devine, we will make Saskatchewan the boom province of Canada. And I am positive that members opposite will not challenge that statement.

The members opposite proved a very basic fact during the budget speech Wednesday evening. They walked into this House with a very pompous attitude. But, as the budget speech went on, Mr. Speaker, throughout the evening, it was very, very obvious that they slid further, and further down into their chairs.

The open for business concept of this government has been criticized time and time again by the opposition. They say that the open for business theme is nothing more than window-dressing. They say that the open for business concept was a smoke-screen to cover up other things. They say that the open for business idea was, in fact, a bust.

Mr. Speaker, all that is not true. The open for business policy of this government is working, and it is working very, very well. Mr. Speaker, it is especially noticeable in the demand growth for power in Saskatchewan Power.

In 1981, in January-February, the number of megawatt hours that we required was 1.7 million. In 1982, the megawatt hours for January-February, was 1.9 million, and those two months were very, very cold. In 1983, we used 1.7 megawatt hours of power. But in 1984, January-February (mild months) we required over two million megawatt hours of power, and the growth of Sask Power is growing tremendously, and the only reason is that the open for business concept is working.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McLAREN: — And it is growing so fast that this year, even before Nipawin comes on stream, we're going to have to be planning the next station to have it on stream by 1990.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. McLAREN: — The obvious should be very clear to the members opposite. Saskatchewan is open for business, and yes, the concept is right for the times; right for the people of the province, and certainly it was the obvious direction to go.

Open for business is alive and well from the province of Saskatchewan despite the members opposite, and the budget announced last Wednesday night will feel the fire already beyond everyone's expectations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give you another example where the open for business concept is working. Saskatchewan Power Corporation announced last fall a \$100 million Buy Saskatchewan program. The former administration really didn't care about the local businessman. In fact, they didn't care about many things other than the lust to government power and control.

The Progressive Conservative government has made a promise to the people of Saskatchewan, and we have lived up to those promises. We promised we would buy Saskatchewan-manufactured products for Saskatchewan Power. The opposition turned that into another doom and gloom promise. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no doom and gloom in the following numbers. Since the implementation of the program, Saskatchewan Power, open for business, buy in Saskatchewan program thrust is beginning to pay off.

In 1981, in goods purchased of \$135 million, the previous administration — they purchased \$43 million from Saskatchewan sources. In 1983, in goods purchased, of \$124 million, Saskatchewan Power bought \$69 million from Saskatchewan businesses — an increase of 31 per cent to 56 per cent. And the percentage of total manufactured in-Saskatchewan goods has risen from 15 per cent to 25 per cent in a few short months, and this excludes buying of natural gas and coal and construction projects.

We didn't wait for the manufacturers to come to us and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we sent our staff out into the province looking for manufacturers who could come up with the goods that Saskatchewan Power required so that jobs could be created in the province of Saskatchewan.

The members opposite went into what I would call mass depression similar to the feeling they had in April of 1982, when they heard the budget on Wednesday night. The people of this province eliminated the NDP, except the poor souls across the way — eight of them. And in all honesty, I feel sorry for the members opposite because they have suffered two very serious blows over the past two years. And I can truly understand why they are so depressed, which accounts for their total negative attitude in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate the statement that I made at the beginning of my remarks this evening. I am proud, first of all, to be a resident of Saskatchewan, and I'm proud to be a member of this Progressive Conservative government of Saskatchewan, and I am proud to support the Minister of Finance's motion on his budget.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SCHMIDT: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Bob Andrew, for what I consider to be a very good budget. And he had to work under difficult circumstances, considering what he had to work with and the legacy left to him — that small band to my right, or should I say to my left. This small band sitting beside me left him a disgusting legacy of mismanagement. And the Minister of Finance has taken this, and in two years, has brought this province into a much sounder and better financial position.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has outlined what the PC government found in April of 1982. To put it in simple language, simple enough for my learned colleagues beside me to understand, the cupboard was bare. These eight men left the cupboard bare. The NDP had to call an election in 1982. It was a cover-up. The cupboard was so bare the secret couldn't be kept any longer. Mr. Speaker, I pride myself in being correct most of the time. But, Mr. Speaker, I said they would not be foolish enough to call an election in the spring of 1982. Mr. Speaker, I predicted they would wait until fall, the fall of 1982. But, Mr. Speaker, I didn't know the truth then. And the truth was that they couldn't wait one further day because they could not cover up the situation that had developed in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I was wrong because I didn't know the truth. But I know it now, and I can tell you that the truth needs to be told.

This province was in a shambles in April of 1982, except we hadn't realized it yet. The members opposite brought in an election budget. They overstated revenue, they understated expenses, and it was the very same type of tactic they used in their great mediscare, Mr. Speaker, there should be truth in politics, and I know that statistics can be distorted, but at the very least, Mr. Speaker, they should tell the truth when they put out a budget. They predicted a surplus, the last surplus they predicted. And it turned out to be a \$220 million shortfall. Mr. Speaker, I can imagine the political lies they would have told had they won that election. And, Mr. Speaker, I can imagine the punishment this province would have suffered had they won that election. And, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that they are where they are now, and that the Minister of Finance is in charge of this province.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to corporations, they forced them into debt. They mismanaged the Crown corporations. They squandered money on advertising. They dipped into the till of the Crown corporations — in SPC alone, \$80 million in their term of office, \$80 million which with interest would be near \$200 million of loss to Saskatchewan Power corporation. Mr. Speaker, under the corporations act of Saskatchewan, which was enacted by the NDP government, it is illegal for a private corporation to pay dividends out of capital. But it was not illegal for the NDP to pay dividends out of the capital of Crown corporations. They talk about a double standard, Mr. Speaker. There is a double standard. They had one standard for public corporations and another standard for Crown corporations. When it came to their pride and job, the family of Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, they raped, looted, and pillaged their own Crown corporations, and we in Saskatchewan now have to pay for this kind of behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, they stand for increased taxes, and I'll go into this later. Mr. Speaker, in April of 1982, we had rising unemployment. Did they do anything to cure that rising unemployment? No, Mr. Speaker. They called an election, a colourful, camouflaged election, full of political lies that the people of Saskatchewan did not believe.

Mr. Speaker, when they called that election, inflation was running in excess of 10 per cent. Mr. Speaker, above all, not only did they leave this province in a shambles, but, Mr. Speaker, they got to the heart and the soul of the people of this province. And what they did, Mr. Speaker, is they spoiled the people of this province with their handouts.

Mr. Speaker, there is no free lunch, but the members opposite do not know there is no free lunch. Mr. Speaker, this budget remains our citizens the elementary principle is that you have to pay for everything you get, and, Mr. Speaker, the NDP had no solutions to the problems developing in 1982.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP criticize our budget as having a deficit. Mr. Speaker, they had deficits that they hid away and camouflaged. Our deficit is above-board and open. We can count it exactly; we know how much it is, and we've told the people how much it is.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan need an economics lesson; the members of the NDP need an economics lesson, because we have to get back to reality. The NDP cannot add and subtract, Mr. Speaker. They can multiply – that takes no brains. Millions of people are multiplying every day. They can divide, Mr. Speaker, and they are divided. Since April of 1982, they have been so divided that that's the only mathematics that they can get accurate. They have eight divided by eight equals one. It's every one of them for themselves over there, Mr. Speaker. They all want to be leaders. None of them has the nerve to say so – that they're all against each other. Mr. Speaker, these people, the members of the NDP, and the people of Saskatchewan need to know some of the principles of government and finance.

Mr. Speaker, there are four principles and possibilities that a Minister of Finance can use. The Minister of Finance can raise taxes, the Minister of Finance could cut spending, the Minister of Finance could borrow money, but the Minister of Finance for Saskatchewan cannot print money. And I can tell you the fourth principle is a principle that only the federal government can use – the printing of money – and I fear the day, if it ever came, that we had a socialist government. There wouldn't be enough paper in this country to print the money they would print.

Mr. Speaker, how can anyone take guidance from the NDP? How can anyone honestly and seriously listen to their criticism of this budget? First of all, the NDP say, "Do not borrow money. There should not be a deficit." I heard the Leader of the Opposition make a gigantic fuss about a deficit – so many dollars per hour, so many dollars per day; the deficit is bringing this province down. So they say, first of all, "Never, never borrow money," and now for the last three or four days, Mr. Speaker, I've heard them say there should be no cuts in spending. There should be no cuts anywhere. The government should increase spending. That's the second principle they stand for. Mr. Speaker, they cannot print money and we cannot print money, and that leaves only one possibility, Mr. Speaker. The NDP stand for raising taxes. Mr. Speaker, in the past few days we have heard them speak out of both sides of their mouth. I thought that was limited to federal Liberal leadership candidates, but it's happening right here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are going to have to make up their mind as to what, if anything, is wrong with this budget. This is to be no deficit, there is to be no cut in spending, we cannot print money. The only possibility is, they want higher taxes. Mr. Speaker, they want to get us back to the good old days of the NDP, the days that were so good when they could charge everyone a high gas tax, which would now be 37 cents a gallon. The NDP stands for gas prices of \$2.23 per gallon, when, in fact, under this government the average price of gasoline is \$1.86 per gallon.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP stands for higher income taxes. This government in this budget reduced income tax for small business and farmers, and the NDP have the audacity to criticize this

budget. Mr. Speaker, I want to know when they will make up their mind and take a position. Will they admit they stand for higher taxes, or will they take the position that this is a good and proper budget?

Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP are speaking from their seats, and they won't even take a position from their seats. I challenge them to stand up when they speak and take position. Do they stand for higher taxes? Yes or no. I challenge them to answer that question. And I challenge them to answer the question: do they stand for higher deficits? Yes or no.

AN HON. MEMBER: — No!

MR. SCHMIDT: — They say "No". Mr. Speaker, I challenge them. Do they stand for higher government spending or lower government spending? They won't answer that question, Mr. Speaker, because they don't know the answer.

Mr. Speaker, look at the province of Manitoba, the last, the one and only, socialist NDP government in Canada. They believe in higher taxes; they tax unemployment. Incentive is a dirty word to the NDP. Anyone who creates employment does not get incentive, they get higher taxes. The NDP in Manitoba stand for higher taxes, and they have raised the sales tax to 6 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the NDP speak by example, and they simply stand for one thing, higher taxes, because they believe there is a free lunch, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there is no free lunch. Although, Mr. Speaker, the free-loaders in the NDP, Mr. Speaker, would certainly understand what a free lunch is.

Mr. Speaker, in my two short years in this chamber I have only learned one thing from the NDP. Mr. Speaker, I have learned that you can quote from newspapers and if there is a difficult position and you need a one-hour speech you can read from the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Speaker, and I have glanced at that. The only thing I've learned from the NDP is that when you're in trouble, read from a paper. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm reading from a paper and I suggest that the NDP are in trouble, Mr. Speaker, because I'm reading from their newspaper.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What's the name of it, Grant?

MR. SCHMIDT: — It says "Political, Economic, and Religious Freedom", the *Commonwealth*. Mr. Speaker, another 5 or 6 pages of political lies starting from the very title, "Political, Economic, and Religious Freedom". Mr. Speaker, the NDP are to be congratulated. I am talking to my learned friends about the budget, and I'm talking about free-loading. I'm quoting from the March 21, 1984, *Commonwealth*, and it was hard to get a copy of the *Commonwealth* for some reason they cancelled my subscription. But I found a copy of the *Commonwealth*, and one of their complaints is, they said it: "We owe the United States a tremendous debt for defending us, free of charge." Prince Albert MLA, Paul Meagher, and the *Prince Albert Herald* and my colleague from Prince Albert want to thank the *Commonwealth* and the NDP for pointing out the truth of what he had to say, and he wants to thank them for the extra votes you will get as a result of them publishing this in a newspaper. And Mr. Speaker, this statement in the *Commonwealth* only confirms that they are free-loaders because we are getting free defence from the United States and they want to criticize that. They also say: "He also claims that any criticism of U.S. actions only supports the communists and that most anti-Cruise activists are socialists." That's the only truth I've ever seen in the *Commonwealth*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SCHMIDT: — Mr. Speaker, I think for the benefit of the public, and for the benefit of my honoured friends, we should really point out that they can't add and subtract, but we should really point out what's obvious on page 20 of the Budget Address. And I expect that they can read, and I would hope they read this, but I would want them to understand where the revenue of this province comes from.

The revenue of Saskatchewan is: individual income tax, 24 per cent; sales tax, 12 per cent; other miscellaneous taxes, 5 per cent; oil, 21 per cent of our budget comes from oil; uranium, .6 per cent – a very small return on a \$600 million investment. I don't know if they want us to close them down or sell them. But Mr. Speaker, who will buy a uranium mine that returns that kind of money on that kind of an investment, and who would want to close down a uranium mine that you can't sell?

So, Mr. Speaker, again they are going to have to make up their minds. With respect to receipts from other government enterprises, we see 4.5 per cent; from our own other resources 6.2 per cent; and from the federal government 17.7 per cent. Now why does Saskatchewan receive money from the federal government? Mr. Speaker, we receive honest money, not hand-outs, from the federal government. These are cost-shared programs from medicare and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba receives the same type of cost-shared programs, but in addition, NDP Manitoba receives \$427 million of equalization payments, which is federal government welfare to Manitoba. And with that \$427 million of federal government welfare, some of it coming out of the pockets of taxpayers of Saskatchewan, the NDP of Manitoba still have a bigger deficit than we have in Saskatchewan, and we pay our own way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SCHMIDT: — Mr. Speaker, they tell us we're a heartless government. Mr. Speaker, here is how our government spends the taxpayers' money — \$92 million on Agriculture; \$637 million on Education and Manpower; \$1 billion on Health; 222 — and I point this out to the critic from the constituency of Pelly — \$222 million on Highways. Now, if the member from Pelly will look carefully when he's driving down the highway, he will find that they are still there, and they are better than ever.

AN HON. MEMBER: — I have to drive carefully to miss all the potholes.

MR. SCHMIDT: — Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from Pelly complains that there are potholes in highways. Mr. Speaker, there may be potholes in Pelly, but, Mr. Speaker, there are good highways in the balance of Saskatchewan. And I say to the critic of Highways for the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that they had 11 years to build a decent highway in Pelly constituency; why didn't they do it? So now he complains to our government that we should build him highways that he couldn't get built for himself.

Continuing, Mr. Speaker. Justice spends \$105 million; Parks and Renewable Resources \$62 million; Social Services, \$304 million; Supply and Services, \$95 million; Urban Affairs and Rural Development, \$271 million. And, Mr. Speaker, most of that \$271 million goes directly to cities, towns, villages, and RMs in this province. Other expenditures total \$396 million, for a total spending of \$3.2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at where the money comes from, and how it's spent, I say to the people of Saskatchewan and to the members opposite: where can we raise taxes? They have no suggestion. The Minister of Finance asked him to go on a budget tour with him and make positive suggestions. They are bankrupt of ideas and couldn't think of anywhere to raise taxes. But yet, they stand for raising taxes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, where can we cut expenditures more? They say we shouldn't cut them at all. We are getting down to the basic services in this province, Mr. Speaker. We are not into the frills — the frills that the former government wasted — our heritage fund. We had seven years of unprecedented income in this province when the NDP were in power. It was a matter of luck, it was windfall money coming to Saskatchewan, money that should have been put away for a rainy day, and they squandered it on frills. They increased the civil service by 10,000 people. A

continuous squandering. There is no limit to how much money the former government could squander. And now they want us to continue squandering money. On who? The 10,000 friends that they hired.

Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers of Saskatchewan have a limit. There has to be some degree of reasonableness, and I challenge the members of the opposition to give us some positive guidance. Criticism is one thing, but I ask them to give us positive guidance.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in this budget we have the Progressive Conservative solution. We wouldn't need a solution if they hadn't created the problems. Mr. Speaker, we now have an honest budget; we have a smaller deficit; we are getting it into line.

We have very small tax increases, and they are on railways. We are taxing railways – the opposition wanted to buy railways. Now, how can railways make any money for you if you own them? It's better to tax them. We have a small increase on tobacco tax, and I am very pleased that they haven't criticized that. There's one thing they haven't criticized yet, but I'm sure they will. And we increased taxes on large corporations.

Now does that sound like a cruel government – a government that is in bed with large corporations – when we increase their tax? Mr. Speaker, for once the members of the opposition are silent, because they cannot comment on such sensible taxation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Speaker, there's been some suggestion by my colleagues that they don't understand it. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that is really a fair comment, because I think that's too generous. If they didn't understand it – if they didn't understand finances, the people of Saskatchewan could excuse them. But, Mr. Speaker, I am suspicious that the former government understood the finances of Saskatchewan, and intentionally misled the people, and for that we cannot excuse them, in any way whatsoever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SCHMIDT: — An honest mistake could be forgiven, but not deception. Now, Mr. Speaker, they told us we had a heritage fund, and all it was, was holes in the ground – no cash, but holes in the ground. Mr. Speaker, we are spending the heritage income as it comes in, to create jobs and keep this province going.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken Crown corporations and turned them around. We have reduced staff, and we've put them on a self-paying basis. I challenge everyone in this province to look at our record on interest rates. While the NDP did nothing, with interest rates up to 22 per cent and the people going bankrupt, this government has granted 13.25 per cent home mortgage rates, 8 per cent farm loans for land, 8 per cent farm loans for agricultural development in livestock, and now, Mr. Speaker, we are guaranteeing five-year, fixed term loans for business. Mr. Speaker, compare the record.

Mr. Speaker, look at what this budget does with taxes. The gas tax is still not there. We have cut taxes, Mr. Speaker, we have reduced taxes for small business, for farmers, and, Mr. Speaker, we have taken the sales tax off of electrical bills for homeowners and farmers. Mr. Speaker, the opposition criticizes a budget that reduces taxes. I submit that they stand for higher taxes, and nothing else.

Now, Mr. Speaker, look at the record on employment. This government has done everything possible to increase employment. Mr. Speaker we are subsidizing the wages of students and young people under the age of 25 to the extent of \$2.50 an hour, so that they can get some work experience. Mr. Speaker, we are taking young people, and we are building Diefenbaker park. We are putting them to work building for the future. We are continuing the Opportunities '84

program to give students jobs.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have to talk about inflation. Until our government was elected in this province, the biggest problem in this province was inflation. Inflation is the biggest thief in this country. Inflation steals from senior citizens. It steals the savings of the retired. It steals from farmers. It steals from non-union people. It steals from small business, because they cannot keep up with inflation. Mr. Speaker, to continue the lecture on economics: inflation steals from the disadvantaged people, and the people who don't have power.

Who are the three big helpers of inflation, Mr. Speaker? Big government is the first helper of inflation. The assistant fee is big government. This government is reducing the big government we found, and sometimes, Mr. Speaker, it hurts a bit to tighten the belt, but a thief like inflation must be captured.

Mr. Speaker, the second big thief is big multinational business, and its monopoly steals from the poor. And thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the third big thief helping inflation is big union bosses. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that big union bosses do not promote production; they promote increases in the cost of living for the citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give us an example of the power of big union bosses. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union had a budget last year of \$3.6 million. This budget of the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union is larger than the combined political budgets of the Progressive Conservative, NDP, and Liberal parties of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest political party, in dollars and cents, in this province is the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union. Mr. Speaker, their budget is larger than these government departments: the Department of Co-operatives; it's larger than the parks capital budget; larger than the Provincial auditor's budget; larger than the Department of Science and Technology; larger than the Department of Telephones; larger than the Department of Agriculture's capital budget; larger than, or equal to, the Saskatchewan Research Council. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union, led by Nadine Hunt . . . And, heavens, I'm thinking about the day that she's leader of the opposition. It's going to be quite a sad day, but I understand she's running as well.

The Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union, led by Nadine Hunt and Larry Brown, has a war chest of \$3.6 million annually, which comes from the backs of Saskatchewan government workers and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this union has vowed to defeat our government, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, they are one and the same as the members opposite, because, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this, that the big union bosses are the puppeteers and Allan and the Seven Dwarfs over there are the puppets. When the big union bosses pull the strings the puppets dance over here.

Mr. Speaker, our government has had a successful record of fighting inflation. Mr. Speaker, we have shown restraint. We have given no increases to 2,600 government managers this year. We've increased spending of this government by 4.9 per cent, the lowest in 18 years. We have reformed areas of welfare, and we have had very small tax increases. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that this budget is a fair budget. It is far-sighted, realistic, honest, and very good for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, if there is any criticism I could make of this budget, I would say it may be a bit too generous; but then, Mr. Speaker, we are a generous government, and the Minister of Finance is a generous man, and Mr. Speaker, I think he has done a wonderful job on this budget, and I will support it. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RYBCHUK: — Mr. Speaker, it has been said that a journey of 1,000 miles must begin with a

March 27, 1984

single step. Now since April, 1982, the province of Saskatchewan has been on a journey away from 10 years of large government and state intervention, and towards a rekindled provincial economy that places greater emphasis on the spirit of free enterprise, new technology, and, most important of all, jobs for people. The budget introduced by the Hon. Bob Andrew, Minister of Finance, last Wednesday, was another positive step on that journey, Mr. Speaker.

The public response to the budget has, and continues to be, very positive. And I do not say that lightly, Mr. Speaker. Since last Wednesday I have had . . . I've been in touch with many of my constituents in my riding of Regina Victoria. The general consensus is that this budget is going to have a positive effect on literally every segment of Saskatchewan society.

The most important fact, Mr. Speaker, is that job creation will put many people to work. There are many small businesses in Regina Victoria, and I can tell you that on that one time payment of \$7,500 for each permanent new job created is good news to all of them.

For our young people, the youth employment entry program is another fine incentive for new jobs.

Those are just two examples of the many . . . of the Progressive Conservative government philosophy, of government working in conjunction with the private sector.

As one who is proud to call himself a small businessman, I am proud to be in this Legislative Assembly as part of the government team that is stimulating the provincial economy with such programs as the Venture Capital Tax program. This program alone will generate more than \$16 million in investments. The previous NDP government was a failure because of their attitude towards the entrepreneurial spirit of Saskatchewan people. Small business is the source of many, many new jobs, real jobs, and in every community of Saskatchewan. All you have to do is drop into some of the shops around Victoria Avenue in Regina, and every small businessman will tell you what a relief it is to have government that supports them, instead of choking them as the old government used to.

Small business is important to our economy. It is important to our future prosperity. This government fully believes that incentives and profits are vital to a healthy economy. Honesty and hard work will be rewarded by this administration.

Mr. Speaker, the vast majority, the overwhelming majority of the people of Regina Victoria constituency are hard-working young men and women. They know the value of the dollar. They also know the reality of making their pay cheques stretch to the limit to meet necessities of life. That is why we welcome tax breaks and other fiscal policies that help reduce the cost of living. The removal of the sales tax on residence electricity rates is a good example of this. Every family of the province, every resident will save money as a result of this.

Back in the dark days of the Blakeney regime, what were the people of Saskatchewan faced with? Let me remind this House, Mr. Speaker, the Blakeney government consistently raised utility rates, over and over again, to the point where people said, "Enough is enough," and they turfed the rascals out of office.

That is not the record of the government of Premier Devine. First, there was a one-year freeze on utility rates. Now it has been announced that there will be no increases in basic telephone services in 1984. There will be no increases, on the average, from SGI. There will be no increase in natural gas rates in 1984. Mr. Speaker, those are the positive steps in holding a line on the cost of living for the people of Saskatchewan.

There is one group of people in our community who were especially pleased with this budget: senior citizens – people who must live on fixed incomes. The Senior Citizens' Home Repair

Program will be welcomed by many seniors in Regina who are proud of their homes and wish to maintain them. This government recognizes the need for seniors to live in dignity, and that is why we will have sizeable increases in the Saskatchewan Income Plan.

For a few moments, Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch upon the subject of health care. There used to be a former mayor of Regina, a former MLA . . . I can't remember his name, but I do remember he and his party used to go out and around, telling people, "Watch out for the Conservatives. They will ruin medicare. They will take it away from you". After a while, these people yelled, "Wolf!" too often, Mr. Speaker, and we all know what happened to them. I'm proud to be associated with the government that has made a solid commitment to make Saskatchewan's health care system the best in Canada, and the fact that, for the first time in Saskatchewan history, the health budget will exceed \$1 billion. That's what you call positive commitment.

Saskatchewan is a province of great human, cultural, and economic wealth. But for too long these strengths were sapped by the big government attitude of the past. I entered public life because I believe in the notion that the taxpayer knows best. This budget reflects that philosophy. That is why I'm especially pleased to note that, in the budget, there was a provision for citizen participation in the Crown corporations. And they will be able to invest in Sask Power and Saskoil through bonds. That is clearly spelling out that the Crowns do, indeed, belong to all the people of Saskatchewan.

Let us take a look on how all of this compares to our neighbour, Manitoba. I have a press clipping from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, dated May 13, 1983, and the headline reads: "NDP Deficit Spiral Cited in Rating Drop." Allow me to read briefly from the article. It reads:

Manitoba financial position has deteriorated significantly over the last two years in major bank ratings, the house said, as it lowered the province's credit rating.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, Howard Pawley's the Premier of Manitoba, as we all know the political persuasions of that government. Now, here in Saskatchewan, our province was the only province in all of Canada whose credit rating went up in 1983. But there is more to this, Mr. Speaker. In Manitoba they've had higher taxes in two consecutive budgets. In 1982 in Manitoba they introduced a payroll tax. That tax taxes those employers to pay to the government 1.5 per cent of all their employees' annual salaries and benefits. I be that sure doesn't help job creation. They introduced a 2 per cent bank tax in Manitoba. They raised the provincial income tax over there. they didn't stop at that, Mr. Speaker. You know what they did next? They raised the sales tax in Manitoba. And, to boot, they increased the gasoline tax in Manitoba. Tax, tax, tax. That's the story of an NDP government in Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the difference between the positive economic climate of Saskatchewan and that of our neighbour to the east. And I am proud to say that our province of Saskatchewan has led the nation in the rate of employment for the past two years. That is because of the climate that has been created by this government. Take a look, for example, at our resource industry. Land lease sales reached a record high of 124 million in 1983-84. Oil production reached 20 per cent, increased 20 per cent, from 51 million barrels in 1982 to 61.1 million in 1983. That, in turn, created 1,000 direct jobs, not to mention the many spin-offs. And now this government has announced a plan to encourage development of the gold and base metal industry.

In a city like Regina, it is always welcome news when a capital construction program is announced, as it was in this budget. Over 1.2 billion, and it'll support 9,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, earlier in my remarks I pointed out that the vast majority of the men and women in Regina Victoria are hard-working people. They believe in the work ethic. Simply put, we welcome the announcement that this government will take a new approach to welfare. I have

March 27, 1984

always believed that nothing's more deadly to achievement than programs that have no incentive built in behind them. That is why I respect the courage of our government to reform the welfare systems. This government has the courage to say no to those that want to live off the taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to return to the subject of jobs, and in particular, jobs for young people. The youth of our province have the key to the future of Saskatchewan and if we deny their place in our community, then, in turn, the whole community suffers as a result. That is what happened for ten long years as hundreds of young people were forced to leave Saskatchewan to find jobs in other parts of Canada. That is not the case of this government. We are making an investment in the future through such programs as Opportunities '84; the summer student employment program; the youth employment entry program; and the careers corporation of the Department of Parks and Renewable Resources. That is all part of our commitment to the young people.

In budget address, the Minister of Finance stated that the times require new ideas. I support that notion, and I firmly believe that the budget address is bold, visionary, and a realistic approach to the complex economic problems of the 1980's. Our programs are aimed at expanding Saskatchewan at a rate that shows the rest of the nation the vigour and vitality of a free enterprise economy. That is much different than the opposition has to bring forward.

Mr. Speaker, as I look at the opposition I am reminded of a leader in the French Revolution who said, "There go my people. I must find where they are going so I can lead them." Well, I listen to the Leader of the Opposition's speech on the budget yesterday, and I am sure that he still has not figured out where his people are going. That is the difference between a leadership and salesmanship. Premier Devine and his government have shown real leadership in this budget.

The opposition has once again spouted rhetoric and old slogans. This budget has managed to control spending, the lowest, as was said earlier, in 18 years. And yet, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that they know the achievement that there has been no significant tax increases. And furthermore, there have been no significant cutbacks in social programs. Indeed, I stated earlier, health care spending is at an all-time high.

Some weeks ago the population of Saskatchewan reached the one million mark. There is a spirit of optimism in the future of Saskatchewan. All the economic indicators point to the healthy economic provincial economy. But, Mr. Speaker, those things did not happen in sheer magic or accident. They happened because governments have the foresight and capability to plan for the future.

That is what this budget is all about. It is a budget that I, as the MLA for Regina Victoria, can go out proudly and visit my constituents about. And I have been doing that. Today I am pleased to report to this Assembly and the people of Regina Victoria that share my confidence in this budget, and on behalf of my constituents I wish you to know, Mr. Speaker, that I intend to vote in favour of the motion in support of the budget.

And with that step, the journey to building a greater Saskatchewan continues.

Mr. Speaker, as it is near 10 o'clock, and I have more to say, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:05 p.m.