

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

**Mr. Goodale:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise under rule 11 to present a petition. It is signed by nearly 4,000 people, primarily from the town of Assiniboia, and a large number of towns and rural communities in the Assiniboia district. These petitioners state their strong support for their local community ambulance service, Wald Ambulance Ltd., and they call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to share that support for Wald Ambulance in the provision of emergency life support services for which this ambulance operator has been widely and highly acclaimed.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Gerich:** — Mr. Speaker, through you and to the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce a group in your Speaker's gallery — Perry Robinson and his family, and Fred Walter from the Spiritwood area. They were at an Atoms hockey tournament here in Regina and on their way home they thought they'd stop by and enjoy question period.

I hope it is informative and informational to them and that they enjoy themselves this afternoon. Please make them welcome.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Personal and Corporate Income Tax

**Mr. Koskie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Minister of Finance, I direct the question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, in view of the fact that for every dollar paid by Saskatchewan residents for personal income tax, large corporations pay only 16 cents, and in view of the fact, Mr. Premier, that since your government took office that revenues from personal income tax more than doubled, from 409 million to over \$831 million, while the total corporate income tax revenue has increased by a mere \$13 million, from 121 million to 134 million — in light of those facts, I ask you, Mr. Premier, how do you justify the continuation and the imposition of more taxes on Saskatchewan families, and decrease in the corporate income tax?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, Saskatchewan is the second lowest taxed province in Canada. And the hon. member selectively uses income tax but doesn't take into consideration all the other taxes. As he knows, in most provinces of Canada people pay health care fees or premiums. In the province of Saskatchewan we pay about \$1,200 per man, woman, and child on behalf of every man, woman, and child through government expense.

When he looks at the fact that you don't pay any tax on clothes under \$300, you don't have to pay tax on gasoline if you hand in your receipts, you don't have to pay tax on your power bills, and you add all that up, you will find that the province of Saskatchewan, when you look at the total tax bill — that is income tax and corporate tax and sales tax — and you put it all together — and health care expenditures — that we are the second lowest taxed province in all of Canada, and we're quite proud of the fact that we can provide these kinds of health and educational services with the second lowest tax rate any place in the nation, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Well I want to say, Mr. Premier, that you can't continue to justify your actions with excuses.

Mr. Premier, are you aware that in this budget that you're spending over \$20 million in self-serving advertising, \$1.1 billion in the Rafferty-Shand boondoggle, \$8.4 million in rent of empty office spaces, and more than \$2 million in high paying patronage jobs? What we ask you is: why don't you stop this shameful waste of taxpayers' money and give them some relief?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, the people of my constituency, and the people of south-eastern Saskatchewan, and indeed the people of all Saskatchewan would like to see us manage water and conserve water, would like to see us build power projects like Shand power in south-east part of the province, would like to see Rafferty dam so that we could indeed manage and conserve water. And the hon. member says, well why don't we stop building in Saskatchewan so in fact that . . . so that we can give more money to people.

What do you think building does? It generates money. You didn't like us building the upgrader; you didn't like us building the paper mill; you don't like us building turbine manufacturing; you don't like the bacon plants; you don't like Rafferty; you don't like the power projects. Those are the kinds of things that create economic opportunity and prosperity, Mr. Speaker.

We didn't go and borrow money to buy them, Mr. Speaker, we built them. And that's a significant difference between this side of the House and that side of the House. They borrowed and they gave it away, and now we have to go pay it back. And, Mr. Speaker, what we do is we create new wealth by building, and that means we'll be a more prosperous province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — New question, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, the people of Saskatchewan don't like waste . . . (inaudible) . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Premier, in light of the fact that your Finance minister, in three budgets, has run up \$2.1 billion in deficit, average of \$700 million every year, in spite of the . . . in view of the fact that he has increased the taxes on ordinary citizens of Saskatchewan 263 million — it's over \$330 million in two years — in light of the fact that services have been cut, in light of the fact that the assets of Saskatchewan are decreasing, I ask you Mr. Premier, don't you think it's the time to give the people of Saskatchewan a break and get rid of your Finance minister?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, as I said . . . If I might, the opposition is still smarting because they never learned how to give tax breaks to the ordinary person. And they never did it; they never gave them a break on high interest rates, they never gave them a break on gas tax, they never reduced the sales tax on clothes like we have, Mr. Speaker. And now they've come to the conclusion, well by gosh, maybe there's something in that; they think that's really kind of novel if you can give tax breaks to ordinary people. We've been doing it for six years, Mr. Speaker. We got elected doing it. We protect them against high interest rates. We don't run out, Mr. Speaker, and foreclose on them. We don't do that. No, no, we protect them against high interest rates, and we cut the sales tax and they like it. In Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, they have a payroll tax and they have utility taxes. Not here, Mr. Speaker. We've learned a long time ago if you want the population to stay with you, give the ordinary person a tax break. And that's what they got under this government right now in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — A supplement, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, if you're so proud of the record of your Finance minister, and if you're so proud of the record of your government, and if you're so proud of the increases on ordinary taxpayers, how about calling the by-election and letting the people of Saskatchewan have a voice.

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, for some reason I thought he'd finally get to that because when he runs the logic and he goes through all . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Order, order.

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, I would just say to the hon. member, I knew he was going to get to that point. I would say that we'll let him know just as quickly as we can, Mr. Speaker, when we'll call the by-elections, and then he can go out and campaign on behalf of his candidates across the province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Farm Debt Crisis

**Mr. Upshall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is

to the Premier. Mr. Premier, Barry Senft of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was quoted on Saturday in the *Star-Phoenix* as saying that your budget failed to address the number one problem facing farmers. He says, and I quote:

We're disappointed there is no financial commitment to restructure the debt faced by Saskatchewan farmers.

And in your throne speech you noted that farm debt is of crisis proportions but you say people in Saskatchewan have learned to live with adversity. Mr. Premier, our farmers don't need your surrender, they need action.

Mr. Premier, will you now introduce legislation on a farm debt moratorium?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, we ran into this kind of problem when the federal budget came out. Some people criticized the federal Finance minister for not providing more in terms of relief at that time. If you recall, Mr. Speaker, the farmers wanted the deficiency payments out ahead of the budget.

The same applies here, Mr. Speaker. The farmers and the wheat pool and others asked to have an extension of the production loan program from three years to 10 years. Now we did that prior to the budget, Mr. Speaker, to provide it as early as possible.

I would let the hon. member know that if we hadn't done that, the total payment due in 1988 would have been \$363 million. As a result of us extending the program, Mr. Speaker, to 10 years, the total that was due was \$109 million, for a total maximum saving to farmers this year of \$254 million — \$254 million that we said to them, you have some discretionary power over. That was prior to the budget because they wanted it as quickly as possible.

Now I can say to the hon. member, maybe a billion two out to farmers isn't everything, but it's an awful lot of money, Mr. Speaker, that has now been extended over 20 years that can provide the relief on the first year of up to \$254 million. I would think that he would agree that that's a significant amount of money.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Upshall:** — Supplementary, Mr. Premier, farm families were expecting something, some action in your budget. They were bitterly disappointed. The Royal Bank of Canada has claimed that it holds more bad farm loans in Saskatchewan than in any other province — nearly twice the national average at 17.5 per cent. The Farm Credit Corporation has 2,700 loans two years or more in arrears, up 500 from last year.

Mr. Premier, I hear your rhetoric; I don't see any action. Will you now promote legislation on farm debt moratorium?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. The NDP position on agriculture is now for a complete farm debt moratorium. That's what you . . . I just want to be clear so that we know where we're coming from and what we're doing.

If that's what it is, I want you to confirm that, and I'd like the leader to stand up and say, now we're going to support farm debt moratorium right across the province of Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I would like the hon. members to allow the Premier to answer the question.

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — I just want to find out for sure, Mr. Speaker, in response to this question, that the NDP have now come out in favour of a debt moratorium so that I know what to respond to. We have introduced a large number . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. We can't hear the Premier, and I'm sure that hon. members want to hear his response, so I once more ask for your co-operation.

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, if the hon. members are asking me to follow on their suggestion that we have a complete farm debt moratorium so nobody pays anything across the province, I need to know that, if you want my response in terms of what we're doing compared to that. Now if you want to know that I will say, Mr. Speaker, we have introduced legislation that protects farmers from losing their land, we've got committees and we've got task force committees and we have got counselling committees and legislation that will allow them at least 120 days protection. And we have provided them up to a maximum, Mr. Speaker, of \$254 million relief this year alone by extending the production loan program from three years to 10 years.

Now if the hon. member want to say in addition he want this province to have complete farm debt moratorium legislation, I want him to reaffirm that so we know exactly the position of the NDP in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Speaker, this government is void of ideas and the farmers of Saskatchewan are sadly seeing that right now.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Premier, last week you were in Ottawa. Surely you met with the Prime Minister of this country and the Minister of Agriculture, and surely you discussed the farm debt crisis issue. Mr. Premier, can you tell Saskatchewan farmers what you brought back for them out of those meetings?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, I will say that I had very good discussions in Ottawa on two things of particular interest in agriculture. One is, as you know, Mr. Speaker, we are building a new College of Agriculture building in

Saskatoon on campus. That's about 70 or \$80 million. And with that biotechnology centre and with the centre of scientific expertise there, we are now — and have applied — the first in the country to apply for a science centre of excellence for the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, here in Saskatchewan, that could be one of the finest and one of the first science centres of excellence any place in Canada in 1988 or 1989.

Now the agriculture community is going to be very supportive of this. We've had support from the president of the university, from the agriculture college, from the biotechnology people, from those in the private sector.

Secondly, we met with all the province, Mr. Speaker, regarding a national meat tripartite mechanism so that in fact we could have a national stabilization mechanism for meat. And we went through much of the detail, Mr. Speaker, and our officials are now working on the details to present to farmers and ranchers across Saskatchewan as well as across Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, maybe one of these times when you make some of your announcements something will happen, but you've missed the point of farm debt. You can talk about everything else — farm debt is the issue. Now, Mr. Minister, our farmers are feeling totally betrayed by your government because you have now become part of the farm debt problem.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Premier, last year you saw fit to collect only the interest on the production loan program. Will you now, if you have no ideas of your own, stop being part of the farm debt crisis problem and begin being part of the solution by rolling back the interest rate on the production loan program and placing another one-year moratorium on the repayment of principal — will you do that?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we considered many options in helping farmers that were in debt. And one of them — and the member from Quill Lakes and I have debated this — one of them has been the whole question of providing operating money at low interest rates. And we looked at our capacity to protect the farmer, and we said we can put out at least a billion dollars, \$25 an acre, to people in this province that need some help, and we'll have as long and as low an interest rate potential as possible and protect it.

Now I say to the hon. member in all sincerity, I mean a billion dollars of operating money at low, long-run fixed interest rates in the province of Saskatchewan is nothing to sneeze at; it's a great deal of money.

And just extending it — I just make the point again — extending it from three years to 10 years has saved the farmers \$254 million dollars of payments that they have to make this year that they could make over a 10-year

period. That's a substantial amount of money — \$254 million dollars — recommended by the wheat pool, recommended by the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), recommended by farm organizations.

Take that long rate . . . low interest rate, long-term money and allow farmers to have access to it, and make sure, Mr. Speaker, that the money is there for people that are young, for people that are retiring, for farmers right across the piece — and my hon. friend from the Quill Lakes often said it shouldn't have been universal, but we've disagreed on that — that's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, on top of it.

One last point, Mr. Speaker, on top of it, we went to the federal government and asked for deficiency payments. We've got over \$2 billion in cash in deficiency payments in the last two years, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Speaker, I have one more question. Mr. Premier, Weyerhaeuser doesn't have to make payments unless it makes a substantial profit; farmers have to make payments regardless of the circumstances. Tell me, Mr. Premier: why does your government have one set of easy rules for large multinational corporations and a set of hard rules for Saskatchewan farmers? Why the double standard?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Devine:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows . . . the hon. member knows that the farmers have received a great deal of money that they don't have to pay back at all from government — a great deal of money that they don't have to pay back at all. If you look at the write-down of FCC (Farm Credit Corporation) debt, if you look at over \$2 billion in deficiency payments, they don't have to pay it back at all. They didn't even have to start their tractor to get that; they didn't have to start their combines. Almost half their income came from gifts from government that they didn't have to pay back at all.

And, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says, well would you at least provide them with some sort of cash and some sort of comfort. They've got a grant, Mr. Speaker, that they don't have to pay back. They've got low interest rates over a long term. Mr. Speaker, both . . .

And third, Mr. Speaker, when interest rates were high, we didn't go in and buy their land, Mr. Speaker, and buy it on behalf of the government. We helped the farmers stay on the land, and they'll never ever, ever forgive you for taking their land at 20 per cent interest rates, and then later, later going back and saying, well, perhaps I could help foreclose on the land that you've lost.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## Budget Increases for Health

**Ms. Simard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, when your Minister of Finance brought in his budget, he talked about greatly increased funding for health, but that's just smoke and mirrors, Mr. Minister. When you accurately compare figures, taking into account capital costs, supplementary estimates, and payments to the property management corporation, we see that the budget has increased by only 3.5 per cent over last year, and that is substantially less than the rate of inflation, Mr. Minister. I ask you, Mr. Minister, where is the money to restore a dental program for school-aged children in rural Saskatchewan as your Premier promised back in November? Where's that money, Mr. Minister?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McLeod:** — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes reference to the budget and says — and she's speaking as a very lone voice across the society of this province if you listen to what has been said about this budget as it relates to health care in the last few days, Mr. Speaker.

The people who are in charge of home care in Saskatchewan, the home care association say, an excellent budget addressing home care. People involved in the special care home section say, an excellent budget addressing, in difficult times, the serious issues in special care homes. Hospital administrators all across the province, within the larger hospitals in the province, are quoted as saying . . . one even said — what was it now? — it's a nice Easter present, says the president of the University Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, people in the health care sector across this province, across the piece, have said this budget is a responsive budget. It's a budget which responds to the issues in health care across the province. The only lone voice in the wilderness against this budget, Mr. Speaker, as you might expect and as I might expect, is that member over there and her colleagues.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, when people see through the smoke and mirrors on your budget and put pencil to paper, they'll realize that the increase in your budget for Health is grossly inadequate and does not meet the rate of inflation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Simard:** — And last year in your budget, you destroyed the prescription drug program, forcing many Saskatchewan people, particularly seniors, to make a choice between groceries and prescription drugs. Now, Mr. Minister, where in your budget have you done anything to rectify that wrong?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McLeod:** — Mr. Speaker, the member will continue to talk, the member will continue to talk about

one program, one program. The member will not look at this budget. This budget, \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker, one-third of every dollar that's spent in the public sector in this province, is spent in this Department of Health on behalf of the 1 million residents of this province in all of their needs across health care, which are substantial.

And this budget is responsive, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, very responsive. That member over there will stand here and scold me and get in that scolding mood and tell me all about how this should not have taken place and there's some kind of smoke and mirrors and all the rest of it.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say to that member from Regina Lakeview: they're no different. Everyone in this province, everyone in this province involved in the health care sector who has an understanding of the sector says this budget is responsive. The only lone voice, as I've said, is that member over there.

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, when the by-election . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, order. Is the hon. member asking a supplementary or new question?

**Ms. Simard:** — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, a close look at where the increases in the Health budget went shows your government's approach, I suggest. Funding for public affairs is up some 200 per cent. A new Health public relations campaign is to be set up, we understand, and information systems costs increase by 115 per cent.

Mr. Minister, isn't it true that instead of trying to deal with the problems in health care, you have decided instead to spend money on a PR solution, trying to paint a picture rosier than reality.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. McLeod:** — Another example, Mr. Speaker, of that member suggesting to us that public affairs and her portrayal of public affairs. Let me just explain to the House, Mr. Speaker, and to you for a moment.

The increase in the budget as it relates to life-style promotion, good healthy life-styles, the kinds of things which prevent . . . the kinds of things which prevent curative solution that they always talk about. Now, Mr. Speaker, here we have an increase in that area, and that member . . . every member in this legislature and every citizen in this province should be pleased, and most are pleased, as a matter of fact, with the increases and with the budget proposals which are put forward as it relates to promotion of healthy life-styles for all citizens of all ages in this province.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the member makes reference to, "call a by-election and the people will say." Mr. Speaker, I will say to the people during by-election campaigns or other campaigns: this budget addresses rehabilitative services for our citizens. Mr. Speaker, rehabilitative services are the following, the kinds of things this government is becoming known for: rehabilitative services as it relates to people who are in serious trouble

with addiction to drug and alcohol abuse, rehabilitation for young people who are hooked on drugs and alcohol — that's the thing that we're known for. Mr. Speaker, rehabilitative services that we see just close to this building in the Wascana Hospital that's being built — one that they would never build — but rehabilitative services for injured workers, for crippled children, and so on. It's . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. Order. Are hon. members ready for the next order of business? Order, please. Order.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 2 — An Act respecting the Use of the English and French Languages in Saskatchewan

**Hon. Mr. Andrew:** — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, An Act respecting the Use of French and English Language in Saskatchewan.

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

## 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. Lane that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance.

**Mr. Koskie:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that I'm pleased to have this opportunity to enter this debate to respond to this, the third budget of the Minister of Finance opposite. And I think what the Minister of Finance has proven in this document is that three wrongs do not make a right. What the people of Saskatchewan are saying to the Minister is that three strikes and you're out.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, a budget should set out the government's plan for the future. A budget should identify clear priorities. A budget should raise revenues in a fair and reasonable way. A budget should provide a vision of Saskatchewan's future. But this budget does none of these things.

What this budget does is to provide more debt, more taxes, less equity in our Saskatchewan assets, and less services for the Saskatchewan people. I say again, Mr. Speaker, what this budget does is increase our debt, increase our taxes, reduces our equity, and reduces our services.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — And I say, Mr. Speaker, it is little wonder

that this budget has been branded hopeless, heartless, and helpless.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Hopeless, heartless, and helpless. What, Mr. Speaker, are the highlights of this budget? As I said, there are more tax increases for ordinary people, more tax cuts for the big corporations. Today, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan for every dollar that ordinary people pay in personal income tax, the big corporations pay only 16 cents — more tax increases for ordinary people, more debt for farmers and working people, more give-aways for their big business friends, more profits for the Peter Pocklingtons of the world. And what is the result of their actions, Mr. Speaker? What have they accomplished? Another deficit, the seventh in a row — \$328 million more on the backs of the residents of Saskatchewan, a \$3.7 billion of accumulated deficits over seven years, a total provincial debt of \$11.7 billion. This, Mr. Speaker, is the highest per capita debt in all of Canada. And now, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that that is mismanagement on a grand scale.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — That's what the minister opposite calls performance. And how do the people respond, Mr. Speaker? How do they respond to what this government says and to what this government does?

Well people tell us that the Premier has a problem, Mr. Speaker. They say his Minister of Finance has a problem, and they say that this government has a problem. People tell us that they can no longer trust this government. People tell us that they can no longer believe the Premier. People tell us that this government has lost all its credibility.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — That's what the ordinary people of Saskatchewan are saying. This government promised farmers of Saskatchewan a farm purchase program, and I ask you: where is that farm purchase program today? I say it's gone, Mr. Speaker, it's gone — gone with their credibility.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — This government promised an improved prescription drug program, and they promised it on two successive elections. And where is the improved drug program, or drug plan? And I say, Mr. Speaker, it's gone — gone with their credibility.

This government promised free telephones to our citizens, and they pledged it. And where are they today? Gone, gone with their credibility — Mr. Speaker, promises made and promises broken. And as a result of all these broken promises, what has happened to the people's trust? Gone, Mr. Speaker, gone with their credibility.

Mr. Speaker, four years ago the then Finance minister set out in what he called the most intelligent budget — and many will remember that — and he drafted the so-called

“partnership for progress.” This partnership for progress would be, and I quote: “a comprehensive, far-reaching plan to dramatically increase funding to the four corner-stones that our province rests on — education, employment, agriculture and health care.” And this partnership for progress would be a long-term plan to improve all four of these areas.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what has happened since that time? How has this partnership for progress been developed by this government? Let us examine how this budget has treated the four areas of employment and education and health care and agriculture.

And I'll turn first of all to employment, Mr. Speaker, and I'll tell you in respect to that, you recall the words of the Premier to the young people of this province — join with us; there's so much more you can be. Well I would like to begin and set out what happened to that promise by the Premier.

What has happened to the government's commitment to the provision of jobs for working people? Let us examine the performance of some of the key economic indicators. Housing starts. Last year was a good year for housing right across Canada. Housing starts were up 20 per cent across Canada — more homes for ordinary people. But not here in Saskatchewan — no, not here in Saskatchewan. Here in Saskatchewan, housing starts dropped; they dropped. Mr. Speaker, by 11 per cent. Last year in Saskatchewan we had fewer new housing starts than we have had for well over a decade. And what does that mean, Mr. Speaker? It means fewer jobs for our tradespeople, fewer opportunities for small businesses to provide materials, fewer opportunities for young people to learn the trades. Yes, that's what it means — lost jobs, lost opportunities. And for some it meant leaving their home or farm, in fact leaving Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, for some who stayed, it meant leaving their job and being forced on welfare, losing their opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to their community and to their province. So much, Mr. Speaker, for their involvement in their partnership for progress.

What happened, Mr. Speaker, to those who sought their own business, that of owning and operating their own business? That last year Saskatchewan had 922 bankruptcies — nine per cent more than a year before, and much higher increase than the national average. Shattered dreams, Mr. Speaker, lost opportunities. So much, Mr. Speaker, for the involvement for partnership for progress.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Last year, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan had the second lowest rate of retail sales growth in Canada, less than half the national average. And why was that, Mr. Speaker? Why were retail sales so low? The answer is simple: when you freeze wages; when you increase taxes; when you shift the tax burden from corporations to ordinary people; when you raise license fees and other

charges in some 234 different areas, one thing is certain, Mr. Speaker — you reduce the ability of ordinary people to purchase retail goods and services. You reduce the opportunities for small business to meet the needs of the community they serve. And I'll tell you, that's bad news for small business in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and they're suffering under this administration.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — I say, Mr. Speaker, that's some partnership, and that's some progress they have offered to the people of Saskatchewan.

Today in Saskatchewan, 41,000 people are unemployed. And these are more than numbers, Mr. Speaker; these are men and women, young and old, in every community in our province. These people want work, Mr. Speaker; these people need work. These people want to be involved; they want to be partners in progress; they want to be partners and participants in the affairs of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, and what does this government offer? What does this budget offer to these people? Well this year the budget actually cuts funding for job creation, and I say they had no winter works program to help the job problem. at a time when unemployment is unnecessarily high in Saskatchewan, at a time when unemployment is incredibly high — 13 per cent in Saskatoon — at a time when one person in 10 in our four largest cities walks the streets in search of jobs, this government cuts funding for job creation. ask the unemployed, Mr. Speaker, about their involvement in this so-called partnership for progress.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to be honest. There is still one major job creation program left in the government's assault on unemployment. and I was surprised that it wasn't the centre-piece of this budget. I was shocked that the members opposite haven't stood up and sung its praises. Because if ever there was a program that illustrated so clearly to the people of Saskatchewan the kind of future that this government holds in store for the young people, it is this program.

And I ask: what is that program? It's a program designed specifically for our best and our brightest — you know, our future lawyers and our future teachers and our future doctors and our future dentists and our future accountants and our future agricultural graduates. And you ask, Mr. Speaker, what hidden program is this? Why, it's the government's commitment to provide summer employment for university.

And what does it entail? Well it entails counting gas receipts, of course, Mr. Speaker. This is their commitment to our young people of Saskatchewan; this is their vision for the future; this is their commitment to excellence. Now that's some partnership; that's some progress. Yes, Mr. Speaker, some partnership, some progress.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, some people don't want to be partners with this government any longer.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, some people have decided there's so much more we can be somewhere else.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — I'll tell you, thousands of our youth have fled this province to get away from the economic mess of this government has created. In their economic forecast, the government's economic advisers pointed out, and I quote:

Economic conditions are worse in Saskatchewan than in central Canada. About 85,000 people could migrate from the province between now and 1995.

Eighty-five ex-partners making progress elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, let me turn to another corner-stone of this government, so-called, and that is education. I'd like to indicate that this budget here boasts of an increase of some \$39 million, or a 5.2 per cent increase in spending. Now that sounds almost too good to believe, Mr. Speaker, and it is. Unfortunately, as we have learned so often about this government, this is yet another example of wishful thinking over accuracy.

(1445)

In 1987-88 this government budgeted 750,290,000 for education, an additional 23,494,000 in supplementary estimates, for a total of \$773,784,000. This year it is budgeting 788,966,000, for a total increase in the educational funding, considering the actual spent last year, funding of 15,182,000, not 39 million as the minister claimed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — You know the total in actual increase in the educational spending this year amounts to about two-thirds of what this government donated to Peter Pocklington. The increase in school operating grants, university operating grants, grants to our technical schools is not even one-half of the amount of grants provided to Peter Pocklington. And at the same time as this government slashes the budget for the school for the deaf by 51,000, it spends over \$100,000 to rent empty office space at the Ramada Renaissance. Some educational priorities, Mr. Speaker, some partnership, some progress.

But, Mr. Speaker, even these increases do not reflect the actual situation. Let us look at how this government has funded these areas since 1986, and still a different picture comes forward.

In 1986 the university operating grants for our university were \$143.5 million. In 1987 they were \$143.5 million. In 1986 they're \$146.4 million, so that in the past two years the grants have actually increased by really only 1

per cent — 1 per cent over the '86-87 fiscal year.

School grants, Mr. Speaker, in 1986-87 were \$333 million — school grants. In 1987, they've cut them back to 329.8 million . . . 7 million — the actual cut of \$3.3 million. In 1988 they're proposing to spend \$336.8 million or just \$3 million since 1986, an increase again of 1 per cent, and inflation has not even been taken into account, which is 4 per cent.

Now that demonstrates a real commitment, Mr. Speaker, to education. It is little wonder that the university professors are on strike, teachers demonstrate on the steps of the legislature, and trustees cut programs, and school divisions close schools. Some progress, and some partnership.

But it doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. The main thrust of this so-called partnership in progress in education has been to reduce the province's share in educational spending and place an even higher burden on local taxpayers.

If we have an increase in the teachers' salary this year, Mr. Speaker, even at two per cent it will cost more than the \$6 million dollars this government has allocated to local school boards for operating grants. This means that local boards will either have to cut other expenditures in education or will be forced to seek higher education taxes from local rate payers. Either the quality of education decreases, or the tax burden is transferred onto local taxpayers. And I say, Mr. Speaker, this is some partnership, this is some progress.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to yet another corner-stone of the so-called corner-stones of progress, and that is health care. I want to say that this government likes to talk a lot about health care. This government likes to talk about its commitment to health care. This government likes to talk about how much it spends on health care, and this year is no exception.

This government says that the health care budget will increase this year by \$65 million or 5.6 per cent. Unfortunately, what you see is not what you get. Actually the increase is only 3.5 per cent, 40 per cent less than what they claimed, Mr. Speaker. In fact, when you remember that Saskatchewan has the highest rate of inflation in any province in Canada, there is actually a substantial cut in real health spending in Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not what the minister says but what he omits that tells us the real story about the state of health in Saskatchewan today. Nowhere in his budget is there a reference to the drug plan or to the so-called new, improved dental program.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — I'll tell you, the government has learned its lesson well. It knows that the people of Saskatchewan were hurt, and they were angry over those cuts. Mr. Speaker, the budget does not refer to the new, improved

dental plan because they claim that privatization of dental plan would be more efficient. So they fired 450 dedicated dental therapists and support staff. They dismantled the dental offices in every school in every community in Saskatchewan. They sold the equipment at fire sale prices to buyers from all over Saskatchewan and Canada who wanted to take advantage of this government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, why did they do all these things? Was it to improve the services to the people of this province? I say no, Mr. Speaker. The people of rural Saskatchewan are faced with long trips now to receive adequate dental care for their children. Indeed, many children that were provided dental care in the past will never receive dental care. So was it to improve the services, Mr. Speaker, ? I say no. This year the so-called, new, improved Saskatchewan dental plan will provide \$7 million less in expenditures than it did in '87 — \$7 million transferred cost onto the people of the province.

And how did they accomplish this savings, they call it, Mr. Speaker? In two ways. First of all, they reduced the age eligibility from 17 to 13, cut out a whole group of young people who were eligible for the dental program, transferring that cost from the plan to the families. And then they reduced the number of children who would have utilized the plan had it still been in operation in the schools of our province. So they have cut utilization and they have cut those who can participate — a great improvement — and they had the gall to advertise that as a new dental program for the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Another area that the minister neglected to mention, deliberately, Mr. Speaker, was the prescription drug plan. Why? Because under the new improved prescription drug plan we have calculated that it costs on average \$145 per family per year is being taxed, not on the basis of ability to pay but on the need for drugs because of illness. This government has given a new meaning to freedom of choice. Now they are giving the people of Saskatchewan the freedom to choose between putting food on the table or purchasing drugs for the ill members of the family.

In 1986-87, if you look at the cost to the province for the prescription drug program, \$76.2 million was budgeted for the prescription drug program. In 1987-88, 56.9 million was budgeted for the prescription drug program. And in 1988-89, \$50.1 million is being budgeted for the plan — a slash of \$26.1 million less than in 1986 — \$26 million more placed on the backs of our elderly and our sick and those that need drugs. Now I say, Mr. Speaker, that's some partnership; that's some progress.

I say, Mr. Speaker, a hospital bed costs about \$400 a day, and this government spends about \$34,000 per day on empty office space. Do you know what? If we got rid of empty office space, we could have 85 more hospital beds in operation today. But we can't; we have to pay for empty office space. Now I say, that's a partnership, and that's progress.

But, Mr. Speaker, I must give credit where credit is due.



This government knows it has a performance problem. In the provision of health care to Saskatchewan residents, faced with this problem, what did the government do? Did it address the problem of hospital wards, expanding them? No. No, Mr. Speaker. When this government has a performance problem, it has only one solution, and only one solution it uses.

And what is that solution? Do you address the problem? Certainly not. No., Mr. Speaker. What you do is place the problem into a public relations context. So what do you do? You establish a task force to identify the problem, even though everyone knows what the problem is — underfunding of our health care system.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Everyone knows what the problem is, and it's the philosophy of the members opposite in the government and their attitude to health care.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — So if you've got a problem, you set up a task force; and secondly, you provide a massive increase in the information systems, up 115 per cent from last year; and then third, what you do is you triple the budget and public affairs budget by over 200 per cent from last year; and fourth, you will, in the words of the minister, undertake a public education campaign that will focus on healthy life-styles and personal responsibility — personal responsibility — for good health.

What the minister is really saying, Mr. Speaker, is that in Tory Saskatchewan, health care is rapidly becoming unavailable and too expensive for ordinary people. That's what he's saying. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that really represents some progress, some partnership.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, I turn to their other corner-stone and that of agriculture. And I want to say that this is a very important area of Saskatchewan's economic and social life. Again this government likes to talk about its commitment to agriculture. I would like to examine this commitment, Mr. Speaker, to examine the performance of the Minister of Agriculture. And first, let's review the previous commitment to agriculture. Here are some of the things that that commitment of that government opposite has done for the farmers of Saskatchewan.

First, a cut in the budget of the Department of Agriculture last year by 25 per cent. They went about the elimination of the property improvement grant. They slashed the farm fuel rebate program from 21 cents to 9 cents per gallon. They phased out the land purchase program; phasing out all provincial funding for agricultural fairs and exhibitions; chopping grants to various producer groups; cancelling travel grants and clinic operation grants for veterinarians; cutting grants for weed control; eliminating grants to R.M.s for rat control; cancelling grants to the University of Saskatchewan for feed testing and soil testing. And the list goes on. I say, Mr. Speaker, that's real progress, and that's real partnership. That's

some commitment.

Now given the record of last year and of previous years, I think it would be difficult to imagine that they could match it this year. But they've tried, Mr. Speaker, they've tried, and I think they have succeeded.

There is a cut of about \$8 million in the agricultural budget, about 5 per cent cut again this year. Grants to agricultural credit corporation slashed by 40 per cent; grants under the 4-H program for our future farmers chopped by 12 per cent; lands branch grant cut by 9 per cent; interest subsidies for farmers reduced by \$9 million for a 25 per cent cut; and payments to the hog and cattle producers will also be reduced by 10 per cent.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, I didn't think it was possible, but this government opposite was able to better the performance of the previous year. A year ago, the Minister of Finance promised that the members opposite would address the two central issues facing the farming community; low commodity prices, he said, and high debt. And on Saturday, March 26, the Minister of Finance is quoted as saying, don't expect too much; don't expect many new programs in agriculture. Well we didn't, Mr. Speaker, and we weren't disappointed.

And then the Minister of Finance went on. Do you know what he said? He said, in essence: we surrender, we give in. He said the problem has shifted in the last few years to one of debt, and cannot be solved by the provincial treasury, he said.

In the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, we learned, and I quote, what their position is in respect to farm debt. Farm debt, they say in the throne speech, is of crisis proportion. And how did this government respond? It said, and I quote: "The people of Saskatchewan have learned to live with adversity. Tough times come, and tough times go." That's what they say to the farmers, 20 per cent of the farmers who are about to lose their farms. They say, Tory times are tough times. That's what they're really saying.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — I say, Mr. Speaker, that must be truly, truly comforting to the farmers. But just in case our rural community or rural families does not truly understand, this government has increased in this budget counselling programs for the farmers by over 30 per cent, so the farmers can rest assured that this government is prepared to explain to them the nature of the farm crisis, which the farmers already know.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this government isn't prepared to do anything about it. Nothing could illustrate better that philosophy of this government than how it dealt with the farmers on one hand, and how it dealt with a huge multinational corporation, Weyerhaeuser, on the other.

This government tells farmers that they must pay higher interest rate for their production loans at a time when they admit that there is a farm debt crisis of all proportions.

And even as our farmers struggle to cope with the low commodity prices and higher input costs, this government increased their interest rates up to nine and three-quarter per cent on their loans.

Now compare that with the agreement to the Weyerhaeuser. Compare with it a foreign, multinational corporation. Does Weyerhaeuser pay nine and three-quarters per cent? No! And what is even more interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that Weyerhaeuser only has to make payment when it makes money. Were the farmers offered that option, Mr. Speaker? No, they were not. Loan relief for the multinational corporations, higher interest rates for our farmers — some partnership, some progress, some future.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the government's economic performance. I've looked at this government's performance in four areas: in health; education; jobs, employment; agriculture. Even though these are, in their own words, their priority areas, their performance has been dismal. When you dismiss the rhetoric and look at their performance, one is forced to the conclusion that this government is incompetent, uncaring, and untrustworthy. Or, as the people are saying, they're all of these things.

Let us examine the economic performance of this government. How many budgets, Mr. Speaker, have they brought in? It's seven. And how many deficits have they brought and placed on the backs of the people of Saskatchewan? Seven, Mr. Speaker. And I ask you, how high is our debt now; how big is our deficit? Is it \$1 billion? Is it \$1,000 for every man, woman, and child? No, it's higher. Is it \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker? Is it \$2,000 for every man, woman, and child? Much more. It's higher. Is it \$3 billion; \$3,000 on the backs of every man, woman, and child? And I say no, Mr. Speaker, it's higher. The cumulative deficit brought down by this administration is \$3.7 billion — \$3,700 on the backs of every man, woman, and child; \$14,800 for every family of four.

Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Finance rose in his place Thursday last, the PC deficit was \$3.4 billion, and when he sat down it was \$3.7 billion. And then, Mr. Speaker, he had the gall to claim that he had reduced the provincial deficit. When the people of Saskatchewan have the highest per capita debt in the nation, the Minister of Finance says he has the situation under control.

Mr. Speaker, how has the minister got the deficit under control? Well I can show you one of the ways that he's achieving the reduction of the so-called deficit. In 1987 the federal equalization payments were \$185 million. In 1988 the federal equalization payment increased to \$360 million, almost double. In 1982, the last year of the previous government and in the previous years, Saskatchewan did not receive these equalization grants.

I'll tell you, we were classified as a "have" province. Today we're classified as a "have-not" province, and as such are the recipients of an additional \$175 million handed out by Ottawa due to the mismanagement, the waste, of the government opposite.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite took office, Saskatchewan's net equity was over \$1 billion. In other words, if you took all of the assets of Saskatchewan and take away all of the liabilities, the value of assets to the province of Saskatchewan was \$1 billion to the good — to the good.

And do you know what this administration has done, Mr. Speaker? The net debt of Saskatchewan today is a minus \$2.9 billion. Net equity is \$2.9 billion in the red. Now I say, that's performance, Mr. Minister, that's progress. With any other business that would be bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker. and that's the administration opposite, their legacy to the people of this province.

Worse still, Mr. Speaker, even as they have placed this crushing burden of debt on the backs of ordinary people here in our province, they have also shifted the burden of taxation. Today the people of Saskatchewan pay more in sales tax — 40 per cent. Today the people of Saskatchewan pay more in the new-founded flat tax, 33 per cent more, as a result of this budget. Today the people of Saskatchewan pay more in personal income tax. But, Mr. Speaker, some areas of the economy are not paying more. Corporations are paying less. In fact today, Mr. Speaker, every dollar this government takes from ordinary people it collects only 16 cents from the corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to look now at the so-called public participation, the myth that this government is trying to foster on the people of this province. This government talks about public participation and how, and I quote: "this common sense approach will assist the development of this province," he said. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that this is a common sense approach. One thing that I am sure is that, as this government sells off the hard-earned assets of the people of this province, big business gets the bucks and the people of Saskatchewan get the cents.

Perhaps the minister opposite could explain to me: how did the people of Saskatchewan participate in the Weyerhaeuser deal when our pulp mill was sold to the corporation based in United States? How did the people of Saskatchewan participate in the sell-off of Saskatchewan Minerals only recently to eastern Canada firms? How did they participate? How did the people of Saskatchewan participate in the Manalta Coal sell-off when they sold to an out-of-province company? How did the people of Saskatchewan participate when they sell off the highway equipment?

Mr. Speaker, this government has created two kinds of citizens in Saskatchewan — their corporate friends who ride at the front of the bus; the ordinary people who get the opportunity to push the bus. And now the Minister of Public Participation, or privatization, wants to sell the bus. I say, some partnership, some participation, some progress.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to ask: what does this government offer the people of Saskatchewan from this budget and in recent budgets? And let me summarize: they offer the people of this province the highest inflation rate in Canada. They offer the people of Saskatchewan the fewest new housing starts in the last decade. They offer the people in Saskatchewan the second highest incidence of low income families in Canada, second only to Newfoundland. They offer to the people of Saskatchewan the slowest growth increase in the labour force in all of Canada, a projected deficit of \$328 million, and a total cumulative debt of this province of \$11.7 billion.

They offer to the people of this province the highest per capita debt in all of Canada; \$26 million in additional costs to sick people purchasing prescription drugs; increased tuition fees for all the students in higher education; at least \$7 million of reduced services under the new, improved dental plan; 234 separate increases in fees and licenses — 234 major increases in fees and licenses.

(1515)

Let me just give you a few examples. Motor dealer license fee issuers has increased from \$150 to \$500 annually — 320 per cent increase. Business Names Registration Act renewal for a limited partnership — that goes up from \$100 to \$150, or a 150 per cent increase. Certificate of incorporation — from \$100 to \$250. I'll tell you, the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that this government is bankrupt financially, this government is bankrupt morally, and this government is bankrupt of ideas.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, you could tell a lot about a government's real priorities by carefully reviewing the estimates that the minister tabled on Thursday. And what do you find? You find a budget increase for the Premier's office, but no increase in the family income plan. You find a budget increase for the Department of Finance, and a budget cut for the school of the deaf. You find \$2.5 million more for prisons, and less money for job creations. You find 200 per cent more money to advertise health care, but less money for Health capital. You find, again in this budget, \$190 million for welfare pay-out — no jobs for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this government increases taxes on every resident of Saskatchewan, freezes the minimum wage, and at the same time they increase the flat tax by 2 per cent for every Saskatchewan resident. They reduce the corporate income tax by 2 per cent, and even though our percentage of revenue from non-renewable resources has fallen steadily in the last seven years, they are proposing a further reduction in resource royalties.

And they haven't forgot another tax — a tax on telephone bills, on your telephone bills. Here they have done the ultimate. The federal government has put on a communication tax, and the provincial government is not only taxing your telephone bill but is taxing the federal government's tax.

Well I want to say, Mr. Speaker, for a few, Tory times are good times; but for most of the people, Tory times are hard times.

In 1983, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier spoke to a group of investors, he stated, Saskatchewan has so much going for it that you can afford to mismanage it and still break even. I don't even think that the Premier could imagine the degree of incompetence of his mismanagement.

Well, Mr. Speaker, since then, what have the people of Saskatchewan got going for them? Well they got more taxes, as I've indicated — more debt. They've had all these services and fee increases. But they got more: car insurance has gone up 38 per cent; telephone bills have gone up 23 per cent; home heating bills have gone up 55 per cent; electricity bills up 51 per cent; retail sales up a hundred bucks; prescription drug costs, on average, \$144.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has got a lot going for it. Oil revenue is going down. Employment is going down and, I'll tell you, this government's credibility is going down.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, this government has created a crushing burden of debt and taxes for ordinary people here in our province, and at the same time that they have mortgaged our future they have, indeed, destroyed our heritage. Gone is the drug plan which people in Saskatchewan cherished; gone is the best school-based dental program in the world; gone is a health care system that was second to none. Mr. Speaker, they have mortgaged our future, they have squandered our heritage, and they have picked the pockets of every taxpayer in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, this budget provides the people of Saskatchewan with more debt, with more taxes, less equity in our Saskatchewan assets, less services to Saskatchewan families. This budget justifies selfishness and meanness of spirit, and it blames the victims of misfortune instead of addressing the causes of this misfortune.

To those who have much, this budget offers much, and to those who have little, it offers nothing. To working people, to farm families, to our youth, to our small-business people this budget offers no help; it offers no hope. It's a heartless, it's a hopeless, and it's a helpless budget.

I say, Mr. Speaker, it's a betrayal of Saskatchewan's past, a betrayal of Saskatchewan's future, a betrayal of Saskatchewan's people, a betrayal of Saskatchewan's promise, and a betrayal of Saskatchewan's trust.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koskie:** — Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this budget but more debt, more taxes, less equity, less services. This government has given the people of Saskatchewan a

legacy of crushing debt, crushed hopes, rather than a legacy of opportunity and optimism. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, for those reasons I will oppose this budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to enter into the throne speech debate of this session of the legislature early on in the debate. And I want to begin by complimenting my seat-mate of many years in this legislature, the Minister of Finance, for delivering what I am hearing from the people of Saskatchewan, people I've talked to, as being a very reasonable and well thought out type of budget.

I see that the opposition critic who has just spoken in the House here — and I must say, perhaps delivered one of the most negative and, I would think, almost on a sour note of any speech I've heard in here in the last ten years.

**An Hon. Member:** — Bitter.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — I mean . . . yes, it was bitter, is the way it came across to me. And you know, he comes with a slogan — and I guess your speech-writers put this together, and I tell you you'll have a terrible time trying to sell that in Saskatchewan.

They talk about hopeless and hapless and things of this nature, and, Mr. Speaker, I talked to a lot of people over the weekend. I went back to my home and around Regina, doing some shopping and so on, and I never heard anyone reflect anything of the nature that the opposition critic did.

Now I want to say to you . . . You know, I've spent a lot of time in this House, and I want to go back to a situation of estimates of a number of years ago when a Mr. McArthur was the minister of Education at that time, and I was the Education critic.

I was new to this Chamber and this House. And the person who had been the deputy minister of Education had been a deputy minister for many, many years and served under various governments. We had our debate in here on the educational estimates, Mr. Speaker. And there were things within that address, in that budget that year, that although I did not support that party philosophically, there were some things there that I believed were good, and they were common sense and they were good for Saskatchewan.

And so when we discussed those estimates, I gave the thrust where I didn't agree, but I gave credit to Mr. McArthur — and *Hansard* will prove that — where it seemed logical and right. Well I want to tell you this long-time deputy minister came down from the stands and he said, of all my years that is the best set of estimates I have ever heard debated, because it was fair — it was fair. There were some things on each side of the House — and I know they don't like that — there were some things from each side of the House that said, yes, that's good, and that's in the best interest of Saskatchewan.

I listened to this critic in this Chamber for over an hour, and I never heard him say one positive thing, not one

positive thing about the budget brought in just last week. Now he may not agree, he may not agree with statements like taking welfare fraud, cutting down on welfare fraud and using that money to help people with foster homes. I happen to agree with that, and I believe a lot of people in the province of Saskatchewan agree with that. And I don't care from which side of the House a suggestion like that comes; if it is common sense and if it is good for Saskatchewan, then why not give credit where credit is due.

But did I hear one statement of that from the member opposite? I heard bitterness coming from that member. I heard rather a sour approach and a complete condemnation of a budget which I believe had some very good and common sense ideas. He happened to say, and he wanted to talk about a government . . . he said they were a government that are morally bankrupt. Well I would debate with him, or any member opposite on that side of the House, about moral bankruptcy. I would love him to justify the standards of the member from Moose Jaw, his standards on adoption, adoption by homosexuals. That's his viewpoint. We happen to differ with that on this side of the House.

I would debate with the members on the other side their stand for abortion on demand, free. Abortion is a means of birth control, and many of them stand for that. I don't believe this side of the House would tolerate that. I know we do not, and I think that is moral bankruptcy. And of course we know what their member in Vancouver has been saying in the last two years. So if you want to see the government and the party that is on the side of families and family life and family virtue, they sit on this side of the House, not over there. We know very well where that moral bankruptcy is.

Not only do we know that, but many people in Saskatchewan . . . if there's one thing that happens to me more and more as I walk around the streets of the towns in this province, I have more people coming up to me and saying, what has happened to the NDP since they lost Allan Blakeney? That's the question in the minds of people. That's the question, things are shifting, shifting far away from what were maybe more substantive issues to things that many of us question as very unsubstantive.

Mr. Speaker, I question and I challenge the members on the other side of the House to accuse this government of being morally bankrupt. What did they ever do to support families? In 1982, Mr. Speaker, we know that families were losing their homes because of interest rates. Would they step in and help them? No, they certainly would not. They wouldn't lift a finger to help the families of this province.

What about the farmers? I listened to the hypocrisy of the member opposite talking about what they had done for farmers. Well I'll tell you what they've done for farmers — and I'll tell you most recently what they've done for farmers is that the now new Leader of the NDP allowed his law firm to go out and foreclose on farmers, both on farms and on home mortgages. And if that's helping families in Saskatchewan, then I don't understand that type of rational reasoning. Now is that moral? I question that also, if that's moral.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we see a man stand up and take an hour in this House to never give any credit to some things that I believe were very substantial in that budget, I wonder who's being moral and who's being honest and who's being truthful with the people of Saskatchewan.

He criticizes health care. And I want to take a few minutes to talk about health care and education and families because, Mr. Speaker, there are things that mean a lot to me and to many people that I represent in this province. He mentions about the budget of the Department of Health, and I will give my colleague from Meadow Lake full strikes in holding and bringing forward a very substantial, a very well thought out health budget in which we see an expenditure, Mr. Speaker, in this province of \$5,000 per family of four in health care. And I'd challenge any other government in Canada to make up that kind of a comparison.

And we see that the Minister of Health has brought forward the nursing homes that were promised. And I remember when we had the five-year plan and we brought it in, and last year there had to be a deferral, and we know that. But the minister stood strong to his word, and he said to the communities that I had dealt with when I was minister and he continued to deal with — he said, just wait, and you will see that you will get your nursing home or your integrated facility or your hospital expansion when we can come up with that type of investment, and we have.

Last year there was a deferral; we all know that. It wasn't applauded. One understands. But certainly this year he has delivered, and I know in the town of Montmartre, which is in my seat, who are getting their integrated facility; and I know the city of Estevan with their hospital; and Davidson and Humboldt, and many of these that he has dealt with, that they're saying, right on; you're delivering as you said you would. And those are important things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the people of this province.

(1530)

Not only in the extended care beds but also more money for home care, more money for alcohol treatment for our young people — all of the substantial things that help families and help the people of the province of Saskatchewan — come forward in this budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the budget as presented by the Minister of Finance and drafted by the Minister of Health in regard to health care in Saskatchewan is certainly a forward-looking budget, and I believe that the task force will go a long way to designing the health care system of this province for years to come, which will again continue to be not only the best in Canada but the best in North America. That's our goal and that's our objective.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — And, Mr. Speaker, as I said, families are important to us. And I see that in this budget the Minister of Social Services has been able to have some

money put forward to expand day care, to expand day care not only into the cities of the province but also into the rural areas, Mr. Speaker, where it is much needed. And I applaud that and congratulate the minister for that initiative. Day care will be there for rural Saskatchewan as well as urban Saskatchewan. and also, if my memory serves me correctly, there is a line in there that indicates, for those families with children of special needs, and I know very well that that will be well received by many people in the province that suffer from that type of situation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe when they talk about compassion and caring and feeling and families that we see within the health and social services thrusts of this budget, that those basic ingredients, those basic elements of Saskatchewan society are being looked after and being well taken care of in this budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — And certainly, Mr. Speaker, if we're to develop the potential of this province, it is to develop the potential of our young people. And I'd like to speak to that for a minute because, having spent a large part of my career in education, it is certainly important to me. And I want to say at this time, I understand that there is a tentative settlement between the teachers of the province and the boards that employ them. I congratulate the people on this, and I hope it is certainly ratified and brought to fruition.

And I understand that the negotiations are going on today between the university professors and the administration. And I hope again that saner heads prevail and that the students who are in the universities of this province will be able to write their exams without the stress and strain of wondering when they will get their marks, or even when they can have the exam. I hope that type of logical thinking takes place, and I urge all of those who are involved with that to let that take place.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education — I don't think there has been a busier one in the history of this province — has been in a large number of schools, and I hear right across this province of visitations with staff and with students, right down there at the grass roots, talking about the issues and explaining the new core curriculum that's coming in.

And I want to congratulate the minister, because I see in the budget, I believe it is \$1 million for in-service training so that teachers can implement the new core curriculum. And I can tell you, spending many years in the classroom, that in-service training is something that the teachers require, and is something that teachers certainly appreciate because as you bring in new thrusts in education you can only do your job if you have had that type of training to bring you right up to speed with these new initiatives. And I think that is forward looking; I think that augurs well for Saskatchewan, and I believe that's in the best interests of our students, now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I see also in the budget some initiatives in education, initiatives in education for the further development of services for the handicapped. And again I

compliment to the minister on that because I believe that as we'll see the horizons . . . I was just reading some articles today regarding services to handicapped children in Los Angeles — use of computers, new technology, where we are seeing that some of those who years ago were put in institutions and written off as having no potential are able, through new technology and new teaching methods, to develop a potential that is far greater than anyone every realized, Mr. Speaker.

And I encourage the Minister of Education, and I commend him for putting the initiatives in the budget in the province of Saskatchewan that we may some day lead in Canada, and these types of new teaching techniques with the use of computers and new methodology to unlock that potential, that just because there maybe was a little listlessness in the eyes, and maybe the facial expressions were a little different, that there is a lot more potential there than anyone else realized. If we can share in that in this province, Mr. Minister, I say, good work, and let's get on in doing it.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I hear the members opposite get up and say that it is an immoral budget, that there is no feeling and no care, and when I see thrusts for handicapped people, and I see thrusts for students and for seniors and for health care, I say that is a moral budget, that is a budget coming from a government that cares about families and that cares about the young people and the future of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — And, Mr. Speaker, as a government that takes it head on, we realize that there is a problem out there. The Minister of Health is well aware of this, and my colleagues within this government, that due to no one's fault but the times we live in, that drug and alcohol abuse is a very, very serious situation ruining the lives of many young people in the province. And you will see substantial moneys, substantial moneys — I think a 16 per cent increase — to combat that and to take it head on and to take it out with this task force and to talk to the people of the province of Saskatchewan and to develop initiatives and new plans to make Saskatchewan free of this terrible curse that is affecting the lives of our young people.

And Whitespruce probably is one of the most avant-garde and the furthest advanced type of facilities in this province. And I see he's changing the Calder Centre. And I remember when I was in health care, there was the home in . . . Frank Eliason centre in Saskatoon, was questioned, what should we do with it? We're building a new level 4, and here . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — The one they would never build.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Yes, that's right. And here we see now that it is going to be used also for youth and drug treatment in this province. I just want to help and say to the ministers, both in Education and in Social Services and in Health, that I believe, Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you look at this budget and you look at the initiatives, you will see that it is far from an immoral budget. It is a budget

that cares for families; it is a budget that puts forth those very, very precious elements of our Saskatchewan way of life and our Saskatchewan culture in this province. These are certainly some of the paramount objectives in this budget and, I think, well received.

In Agriculture of course, the backbone of our province, and as I said earlier, we hear criticism about what we're doing for farmers. I don't think I have to go through this in any detail because many of my colleagues will explain this, but I come from an agricultural seat, and Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the farmers in the part of the province that I represent are very, very supportive of the initiatives that have been brought in by this government since 1982.

If you would look at a farm purchase program, at cash advances, at a production loan program, removal of fuel tax — all of these things put together — there has been by this government initiative after initiative that has gone to the wall to safeguard the farm families of this province. And I think if you heard the Premier today in question period, you'll see that about 50 per cent of the income that is coming to some of the farmers in these difficult times is coming from initiatives from government.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is much different, and let me remind you once again, this is much different action than the action taken by the Leader of the Opposition in the law firm of which he is a member, and where they were working with the banks to help bring about the foreclosures on the farm families of Saskatchewan. There, Mr. Speaker, I think is where I see the immoral action.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we hear — and I want to bring this to your attention — we heard the member, the critic opposite, say that there was certainly going to be some terrible tax gouges of the ordinary person in the province of Saskatchewan. I was talking with the Minister of Finance, and I think it's very interesting to note, and I think you'd be interested in this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that with the implementation of the changes in the tax structure that the Minister of Finance brought in in his budget, coupled with the changes in the tax structure by the federal government, that when those are both impacted, the only tax group that will receive an increase, Mr. Speaker, are those in the \$50,000 range. And would you believe that the combined tax increase, when both have been implemented, will come to \$14 — \$14, \$14 a year, or a little over \$1 per month. I do not think that is an outrageous type of increase in taxation. And that is the only one that is a tax increase.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take some time now to talk about one of the new thrusts of this government, one of the ones that I have responsibility for, and that is in public participation. We hear the minister . . . the critic opposite giving some negative remarks again about public participation. We've seen some questions from some of the members in the House about this, and certainly this is where it should be is right in this House, and if there's a philosophical difference about this or if they think it's not beneficial for Saskatchewan, then by all means raise it because that's what this forum is for.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to

indicate to you and to the members opposite what is meant by public participation and why public participation is a thrust of the Devine government at this time in the development of our history. And I should say, not only of this government but of governments around the world. You know, there are those that say it's ideologically driven. Well I think you could check with some of the other ones such as Austria and Hungary where we see the same thing taking place, and in New Zealand where there are socialist governments in place, who are well along the way to a change in the delivery of government services. It's happening around the world in approximately 35 different countries; it's happening here in Saskatchewan, and it's happening here in Canada.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just indicate to you what public participation means. We will hear the members opposite say, oh well, it's selling things — they like to emphasize the selling part. Well I want to say to you, it's much more than selling things, because I've seen four component parts to the public participation. And true, one of them is the divestiture of Crown—owned assets to the private sector, and certainly we have seen indications of that, and that's one aspect of it.

And I cite, for example, Weyerhaeuser. They preferred to see PAPCO (Prince Albert Pulp Company) lose \$90,000 a day; that was their idea of a good deal. We were able to bring in a company, Weyerhaeuser Canada, who have built ... are building right now a paper plant which I don't think would have been built otherwise. You were there with me at the tour of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about a week or two ago. I believe there are about 500 people working there now and may peak to around 700, with permanent jobs in the neighbourhood of 160.

So certainly what I saw in my visit to Prince Albert was not a detriment from that type of action, but a very positive sign. And I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you're much closer to that scene than I am, and I imagine you could tell me the feeling of the people there, but the people I talked to were very positive of it. There were jobs there, there was building, there was growth. And I understand, in discussion with some of the people there, that Weyerhaeuser will have contracts in Japan. It will be state of the art paper that is produced, using our raw products with value added, creating new jobs. And to me that's economic diversification and the way to build this province.

So in public participation, one aspect can be that type of transaction as took place in Weyerhaeuser, as took place the other day with Sask Minerals in Carrot River and in Chaplin, where we were able to have \$60 million come into the province. We were able to bring in expertise that will have value added products that will add new jobs and create new wealth in this province.

But that's only one aspect. A second aspect of public participation, Mr. Speaker, is that of contracting out, where we could take something that is being done by the government at this time with government employment, and perhaps those employees or someone else in the society could contract to do that work. And that is nothing new. Many of these things have been going on.

I cite last year where the decision was made by this government to contract out the auditing services of the Crown corporations to the private auditors in this province. And I understand that is working well, and it's nothing new. It has been going on.

(1545)

We could do the same thing with legal work and various other professional things. But it doesn't just have to be professional type of services. One that comes to mind and could be looked at is certainly the mowing of ditches along our highways. I know we all would like to see our province looking very nice and a beautiful attraction for our tourists. And certainly we could look at a contract to farmers. And goodness knows, some of them may need that to try and mow the ditches and beautify the highways. That's a simple example.

A third aspect of public participation, which they choose to ignore, of course, is that of employee take—over of a function they're doing now, and that may be where a group of employees say, look, we'd like to form a little company or a co-operative; we'd like to do the service that we're doing for the government now, and if we can do it more efficiently, then that benefit comes to us and we can compete in the private sector for other types of work. That also is public participation.

And of course the fourth aspect of it, and probably the one that they choose to ignore most often, is that of shares and bonds that people of Saskatchewan can have in the development of our province. And again this is nothing new, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have seen the Saskoil shares that many people have purchased in the province. SaskPower has had three or four bond issues. And we may look at more of those type of things.

We may look at things such as Saskatchewan government bonds. Surely the idea of Canada Savings Bonds is well understood and well accepted throughout our country. And why shouldn't the people of this province, why shouldn't they benefit from the type of development that will take place in the future years? Why is it necessary that we go and borrow money for SaskPower or SaskTel or the government, whoever it may be, in the New York money markets or in Tokyo or in Switzerland, and the interest accrue to those areas? Why can't we borrow from our own people and allow them a good return on their money, and they benefit from this development and they become stakeholders in the development of this province?

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to do this in a way that people can certainly access this type of borrowing. I don't know about your constituents, but I know many of mine are not sophisticated investors. Many of them have never been in a brokerage house. Many of them feel that you need 5,000 or \$10,000 to walk in the door. Well that isn't the type of development and participation I want to see.

I want to see the person out there in Saskatchewan being able to go to his credit union or his bank and talk to the person who he believes is his financial expert in his community, and through there, right through the local branches all around this province, access shares and

bonds.

I want to see people be able to get these by payroll deduction. Certainly we have third-party groups such as nurses and teachers employ . . . that's a large part of the work—force of this province. I see nothing wrong with hospital boards allowing payroll deductions for government bonds and government shares and so on, or for school boards or for anyone, for that matter. Or people in the private sector allowing their employees to have ease of accessing these types of government shares so that these people can participate in the development of this province in accordance with what they are able to afford.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's nothing new to Saskatchewan. In fact, if you look at this, there's a very close similarity here to the development of the co-op movement in this province. The co-op movement was where people gathered together, threw in what they could afford, a share for each person, and received a dividend. And if we look at that, we will see what the co-op movement has built in this province, the latest being in conjunction with the Government of Saskatchewan with the Co-op upgrader.

So what we're doing with large share offerings and many stakeholders across this province is very, very similar to the development of the co-op movement in this province, but let me tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's on a much broader scale.

We will hope to have shares and bonds in many of our Crown corporations, because what better thing to invest in. They're a monopoly; the prices are set by the government; they're assured. I'm sure that in years to come we will still have SaskPowers and we'll have SaskTels, and so on. So why not allow our people here in Saskatchewan to invest in those and to enjoy those and to . . . into them in accordance with what they can afford, and make it easy for them to do it, make it easy for them to do it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are certainly some of the things that we see as we talk about public participation.

Now there are those on the other side of the House who like to use limp phrases and call it privatization and things of this nature. I don't believe that allowing employees \$5 or \$10 or \$20 per month deductions on their pay cheque, or allowing people to go down to their bank or their credit union or to their broker, or whoever it may be, and access these shares in accordance with what they would like to spend, is any way, shape of a pirating act. I believe that is allowing the people of Saskatchewan an opportunity to build and to develop and to share this province.

Mr. Speaker, I remember back when I was teaching in Wolseley, Saskatchewan, and I voted in an election. I never heard anything of a take-over of potash mines, but soon after the election one day, I woke up and here I was the owner of a potash mine. Well, Mr. Speaker, I never had a piece of that potash mine, and I never had that as any type of . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — No, your only problem was that, Graham, you couldn't spend it in the next hour.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — No. I didn't have any opportunity to

use that as collateral. I touched a hot spot here with the potash mine, because we all know how they said nothing about it in the election, and come in and took them over and bought what was there, not creating one new job. using our money. And, Mr. Speaker, it's well documented, had the member opposite had the foresight and the brains to take it down to the Sherwood Credit Union and put it in there, we would be better off today; we would be far better off.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — But certainly there comes the difference in the viewpoint, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite are obsessed with the idea of the government owning it all. We believe in state ownership by the people of Saskatchewan, and that's what public participation will be.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are many things that they will change as we change in the delivery of government services. I say it's not new to this province, it's not new to this country. It's happening all around the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you and to other members of this Assembly, and any of the people who may be watching this on television, what we mean by public participation, because it's far different — it's far different — it's far different than what the member opposite would say.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to end on a note or two of indicating what I thought was very disappointing action on behalf of the opposition. The other day in question period I saw the Leader of the Opposition try to make a deliberate attempt, the day of the budget, to indicate that somehow the Saskatchewan auto fund was going to be affected. He tried unsuccessfully in here, but tried to confuse the people of Saskatchewan.

Now I say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker: if the members opposite do not agree, fine, and that's well; let that be so. They have every opportunity to come into this Chamber here — that's what it's for — and argue the merits. But to directly try to confuse and misrepresent is not correct. That is not in the best interests of Saskatchewan, and that's what was happening in here the other day.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only does it happen in this Chamber, but it happens out in the small towns of Saskatchewan. I had booked a meeting to go out and talk to the employees of the sodium sulphate division in Chaplin, and when I came there, lo and behold, I see two of the opposition members, feeling that it was their duty to come into the employee meeting. We had the meeting with the employees which went quite well, I should say. But then there was an open meeting in which the town people were allowed to come — and rightly should be, it's the future of their town — and I wanted to discuss with them and allay the fears and rumours which, I should say, had been generated by the NDP and sent out there to the community that the mine was going to close down . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Fear mongers.



**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Fear mongers, that's right. That there would be lay-offs, which was not true, and that they were selling to a company that wasn't even in the action. So we were going to have this meeting with the people. But no, that wasn't good enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, The member from Moose Jaw, minerals critic, came out with some misleading information. The privatization critic was there, but that wasn't enough, they brought out the newly-nominated NDP candidate from Moose Jaw Lake Centre. And what was to be a town hall meeting, and discuss with the people, turned into a political forum. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the political forum is here. We'll debate these issues in this Chamber, as we should, but I think that is an attempt to mislead.

I don't think that's treating people of small town Saskatchewan fairly when the NDP would like to come out and give misleading information and take up the time of that meeting, where the people were intimidated to ask questions, because it became just a political harangue between the members and myself. That isn't the reason I go to that town, and I would ask the members in all due respect for the people of small town Saskatchewan to keep that in mind.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, just one other thing that I want to mention, as we see within these halls and within this Chamber also, an attempt by the members opposite to mislead. the opposition critic, a few days ago, got up and indicated that there was a mining company that was buying the sodium sulphate mine, that had been in uranium development here in Saskatchewan, had operated mines and had shut them down. And that's completely false; that's completely false.

The member opposite was confused between Dickenson mines and Denison mines, and yes, Denison mines did do that. But I don't think that's fair, to do that to companies that cannot come in here and debate. That slur, that slander is cast out there, right into that small town. And I believe the member opposite, when he gets his attempt to talk in budget speech, should apologize to those people because that was certainly misleading.

And I think it was wrong to a corporate citizen that was entering this province. I think he cast a slur upon them because certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think . . . I go back to what I said in the beginning, I do not believe that those things are in the best interest of this province. If there are things that you disagree with, if you don't think the transaction is correct, fine and dandy, that's what this forum is for; debate it, but let's do it fair and square and let's not have slander and slur and accusations that are unfounded, because that's what's been taking place, Mr. Deputy Speaker. and I believe the members that are involved in this should, when they have their opportunity to speak in this House, retract shoe statements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to indicate to you that I believe, in closing, that this budget is one that serves our province well. I believe that, as I pointed out, in the fields of health care, in education, families, protection of those who are perhaps abused, safe houses, things of this nature, action to take on the evils of wife battering, of alcohol and drug abuse, many of those things that are very, very important to the future of this province and to

the families of this province are addressed within this budget.

I believe we see with the added money for soil conservation in agriculture — goodness knows, in the southern part of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is certainly a concern; with the initiatives for irrigation in this budget, we are addressing future trends in agriculture with new crops because farming will be changing, I'm sure, in subsequent years within this province, Mr. Speaker. So I think many of the things that are so fundamental, so fundamental to families and to the ordinary men and women of Saskatchewan and the young people, were addressed in this budget.

And I want to just say in closing again, Mr. Speaker, that certainly public participation is going to be one of the major thrusts of this government as we move ahead in succeeding years. and I wanted to take some time this afternoon to share with you and other members of this Assembly some of the aspects of public participation as I see them, and the minister in charge.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the grounds that this budget is there to protect health and education and the family, and that it brings about means to develop and diversify the economy of this province, and also to improve the efficiency and the operation of government in this province, while at the same time maintaining that very vital component, that component of agriculture, I believe that my fellow colleagues in cabinet, and through the guidance of the Minister of Finance, have come together with a very reasonable, a very realistic budget — a budget that I think will be seen as one that will serve the people of this province. And I'll be more than pleased to support it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Solomon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter this debate on the budget this afternoon. I've been quite honoured to represent the people in the Regina North West constituency over the past 18 months.

Since opening my MLA office in the Sherwood Village Mall, I've had a steady, heavy flow of people and visitors into my riding office from the riding, offering to me their opinions, coming to talk about concerns that they have with respect to this government, and generally seeking information and help in dealing with this government opposite.

(1600)

Never have the problems in my constituency in the city of Regina been so many and varied, in particular since this heartless PC government came to office. People are telling me as they visit, either with me in their homes or their place of business or in my office, that they have never had such difficult times making ends meet, financially, job-wise — be it looking for work or not having a sense of security in the job which they hold, or meeting their weekly food bills.

Family stress is at its highest ever, quite a contradiction from what this PC government says. some have even

likened the PC government to economic terrorists, Mr. Speaker, taking tax dollars out of the taxpayers' pockets at unprecedented rates for bad government reasons, or to use against families, contrary to what the member from Indian Head-Wolseley has said, and their well-being in progress.

Their perception, the people in my riding's perception, is that rather than spending tax dollars for job creation or health care or education, the PC government has foolishly squandered tax dollars on mismanagement, patronage, their rich and powerful friends, the large corporations, and of course, on bad investments.

I note in the health section of the budget a 200 per cent increase for public relations in the health department alone, Mr. Speaker, to advertise what a wonderful job this PC government is doing in health care and in feeding families in Saskatchewan.

My question to the Minister of Finance and to the Premier of this province is this: are hungry families and hungry children supposed to eat pamphlets for breakfast as a result of their public relations efforts? Families and children don't need pamphlets to eat, Mr. Speaker, they need jobs, cash, and good government.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Solomon:** — The families in my constituency are fed up with this government and their crazy tax programs, in numbers which are startling and staggering. Families are hurting all over this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and all this government does — the member from Indian Head-Wolseley and others do — is they sell off the revenue-bearing assets, owned by everyone in Saskatchewan, to a few PC friends at discount prices.

Or their newest solution, their newest solution, Mr. Speaker, in this budget is to increase taxes yet one more time, hoping in subsequent budgets to bring the people and to buy the people into the fold with their own money one more time. Someone told me, one thing is in favour of death over taxes, Mr. Speaker; death doesn't get worse every time the PC government introduces a new budget.

This has been the legacy of PC budget in Saskatchewan for the last six years and over the last seven budgets. The tax burden for ordinary taxpayers, for working people, continues to grow. The budget of 1987 and '88, a tax increase of \$250 for every man, woman, and child in Saskatchewan, was slapped on the backs of working people — a \$1,000 increase for a family of four.

With this budget, this budget of 1988-89, another tax increase of about \$150 for every man, woman, and child in this province, another increase of over \$600 for a family of four, a net increase over the seven consecutive budgets of this PC government of over \$2,500 in provincial taxes on a family of four — \$2,500 increases in taxes.

Saskatchewan has the fastest-growing deficit in North America. My colleague, the member from Quill Lakes, indicated the total deficit is \$3.7 billion — \$3,700 for every man, woman, and child, nearly \$15,000,

Mr. Speaker, for every family of four in Saskatchewan.

Contrary to what the member from Indian Head-Wolseley has said, this government doesn't support families, but attacks families once more through this heartless budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Solomon:** — After having listened to the Minister of Finance, in reviewing the budget, and in light of the reality of life in Saskatchewan, my first impression was that Conservatives enjoy suffering. Of course, that may be a trifle unkind. Perhaps they don't enjoy suffering; perhaps it just makes them feel good to see other people suffer.

The budget and other secret measures taken by this PC government — measures, I might add, we've had to rely on the press to reveal to us in many instances — amount to a blueprint, in my view, for surrendering Saskatchewan and its people to the ruthless exploitation of outsiders. It's another stage in the Conservative strategy of destroying our freedom and our way of life in Saskatchewan.

It leaves few choices for ordinary people. Under Conservatives, the choice of ordinary people in Saskatchewan is either to be sheared like sheep or skinned like rabbits. But we in the New Democratic Party do not intend to see families trampled under the heel of the fanatics of privatization and their foreign friends.

Once again the Finance minister trotted out the old straw man of the world economy to justify the colossal failure of Conservatives to come to grips with the real world in which Saskatchewan people live. Once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance dragged out his bag full of rhetoric about hostile trading environments, possible world recession, greater protectionism, the decline of export prices versus import prices, and the list goes on. Everybody and everyone else is to blame except this government.

Once again he mentions the Premier's favourite one-liner about being world class. Yes, he did it again. I've been wondering, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just what Conservatives mean by this phrase, world class. Now I know. Under Conservatives, Saskatchewan is either owned by everybody else in the world or, with its \$3.7 billion deficit, owes everyone in the world. Yes indeed, Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have made us world class.

Yet we know this tired old method of blaming others for our problems just doesn't hold up under scrutiny. While Saskatchewan faces a more difficult world economy, it's not the first time in our history. There's nothing new or unique about the world economy in which we live. All this talk by Conservatives is simply meant to take the heat off the true source of our economic sickness, the mean-spirited, bungling policies of this Conservative government.

The real reasons for the sorry state of our economy in our province are much more sinister. The real reasons for the way things are happening are found in boardrooms far removed from our borders. There, together with their

corporate friends and allies, Conservatives actively conspire to destroy the historic consensus built over years among Saskatchewan people, and they'll not stop until every last vestige of what was a gentle, prosperous province is destroyed. We in this opposition must not let it happen.

There's a saying going around these days: you can always tell a Conservative, but you can't tell a Conservative much. The credibility of this government, its ability to level with the people, to be believed, to be trusted, is very strained. Conservatives don't listen to people; they don't listen to the opposition when we make speeches in this House. Conservatives, instead, make deals behind closed doors, then tell the people when the dealing's done. Conservatives conspire to fire local people and replace them with outsiders and announce the decisions after they've already been made.

And the example I'll use, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is Saskoil today. Saskoil was set up: (a) to create jobs in a head office in this province; (b) to make a dollar in the oil business so that revenues and profits that were made could be used to help assist the government in expenditures, in terms of operating revenues and dividends to the treasury so taxpayers didn't have to pay the burden; and also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, (c) to explore in Saskatchewan.

What this government has done, as soon as they privatized or sold it off to the shareholders that now own it, they have sold an asset, an interest—and revenue—bearing asset, to other people. We control it in a certain sense with 47 per cent of the shares, but the objective of the corporation, that is to create head office jobs, is now gone. We're exploring in Alberta; we have laid off and fired 275 people when the operation was privatized. We have hired, instead of Saskatchewan people, people from outside of this province, and now when the dividends are being paid, they're not being paid to the people of this province, they're being paid to the shareholders who live outside this province.

Conservatives cut and hack away at the foundations of our very way of life and announce what happens after the dirty deeds are done. They privatize Saskoil, then they lay off 275 people. They privatize Saskoil, then they hire people from Alberta to run it. They privatize Saskoil, and they spend exploration dollars, not in Saskatchewan but in Alberta.

The quality of Conservative credibility is strained to its breaking point. They are gutting and gouging the historic consensus built among all people in this province. And now they have enlisted new weapons in their grand plan to surrender our province to outsiders, surrender control over our lives and our economy. Their weapons in this outrage are privatization, or as they sometimes call it, public participation, and a promotion of a blind and questioning support for the free trade agreement. In one fell swoop they have combined blind incompetence in the management of our economy with deliberate destructiveness to create a recipe, in my view, for disaster for ourselves and our children.

Viewed separately, privatization and free trade are

difficult to comprehend relative to their impact on our lives, but when considered together, as Conservatives already have in concert with their corporate allies, privatization and free trade form a strategy of blitzkrieg, a sudden frontal assault by Conservatives to undermine and transform a free society into a corporate controlled totalitarian state.

The stakes are high. Ultimately it means not only the destruction of our province as we know it, but a sell—out of our country. And you may sit here and think that what I'm saying is perhaps not true. The Conservatives, in their own words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have conceded in public that they plan to sell off every Crown corporation or as much of the Crown corporations they possibly can to their friends and outside interests, to the point, to the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where it will never be retrieved by the people of Saskatchewan again.

And I refer to a Crown Corporations Committee meeting of February 3, 1988, where the Deputy Premier, when questioned about the Conservative ideology with regard to privatization, looked us in the eye and he said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are going to sell off as many of the Crown corporations and as many of the assets of the people of this province as we possibly can, to the point where you, when you get into power, will never ever be able to retrieve them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Solomon:** — And what he meant by that, Mr. Speaker, was with the privatization, that's not so bad; there's always opportunities to recapture some of those economic instruments. But with the free trade deal hand in hand, Article 2010 on page 299 and 300 of the free trade agreement states very clearly that if a government provincially or federally wishes to institute or create an economic instrument, for example like SGI, we require approval, not from a government, Mr. Speaker, the approval of the US Congress. That's what this free trade deal says. Privatization to sell off our assets; the free trade agreement hand in hand to ensure those assets will never be retrieved.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier there has always been a consensus in Saskatchewan — that is, until Conservatives came to power — a mutual interdependence of farm, labour, business, and government people. That consensus was built through extremely hard times, built carefully and lovingly by pioneers who know their strength was in the mutual trust they had for one another — a trust, Mr. Speaker, found in their confidence they could and should control their own destiny. Even in the most horrendous and dangerous periods of drought and war, that consensus among our people carried us through.

Saskatchewan people from all walks of life were a family. They fought among one another at times and had difference, but they were basically a family. They had from time to time different opinions, sometimes conflicting priorities or even arguments, but we were basically a Saskatchewan family with a common

purpose. We were a family united when it was needed or when it counted.

(1615)

Now after six years of Conservative fumbling and bumbling and outright dividing and attacking Saskatchewan families, that confidence and trust we've had in ourselves is undermined.

Conservatives are doing their level best to brainwash our people with right-wing, dog eat dog privatization philosophy. It's a sad state of affairs when your own people turn on you, when members of your own family turn on you, as Conservatives have turned on ordinary Saskatchewan families who only want to live with dignity and purpose.

Mr. Speaker, it's always hard to figure out just which term to use, privatization or public participation. Both terms sound like something you do in the dark or you want to make legal. When Tories want to make their nefarious schemes sound good, they refer to it as "public participation." When they want it to sound as though they're doing something for the individual, they refer to it as "privatization." Which is it? Any way you cut it, it sounds to me more and more like it's privatization, as the member from Moose Jaw North has indicated.

Most people know that the PC government has been getting advice from right-wing, foreign governments and corporations for years. For example, on the right to work legislation and right to work theories of this government, they get advice from Tennessee, home of the \$1.60-an-hour minimum wage. They've been getting it on a regular basis from the Thatcher government in Britain.

For years now, Saskatchewan Conservatives have been cavorting with the courtesans of privatization from Britain — wide-eyed fanatics of the rights such as Madsen Pirie who are bent on turning the clock back in Britain to Victorian times when they were the very few rich and the many, many poor.

You may not know this, but in Great Britain private schools are called "public schools." They're usually schools for the children of the wealthy and powerful. So we can only conclude that privatization must mean the same things as public participation, since public and private are used in this manner in England. It's bewildering, Mr. Speaker, yet it is consistent with a government that says it is "progressive" on the one hand and "conservative" on the other — two contradictory terms.

With missionary zeal, Conservatives have set out to persuade us that somehow we'll be better off if we sell what we already own to outside business interests. This tells me a lot about privatization. It tells me that ultimately the word's true meaning is that a few Conservatives and their families will be generals, and the rest of us will be privates.

But privatization is much more than selling off assets, owned by the people who live here, at discounted fire

sale prices. It's a total attack on every aspect of life as we know it in Saskatchewan, and here are a few of the major elements in the privatization scheme: one, advertising to persuade people that it's wrong for them to own their own vital industries and services; two, attacking public employees and instilling fear and distrust in them by sudden, unexpected firings and other changes; thirdly, giving special money incentives to certain rich parts of the population to buy their financial support; and fourthly, cutting vital programs in the name of greater efficiency; and finally, making scapegoats of the poor and those who cannot defend themselves.

This is the shameful strategy of Conservatives in Saskatchewan: a strategy, Mr. Speaker, without exaggeration, that is a carbon copy of every right-wing, totalitarian government, from Hitler to Stalin to General Pinochet in Chili, or Botha in South Africa.

But don't take my word for it, although my word is good on this. If privatization is such a great idea, why isn't it working in those areas of Canada where it flourishes? Why isn't it working for the ordinary people who live there, for example, in Ontario? Using the Minister of Finance's own figures from his budget: in Ontario, medicare premiums are \$714 per year, car insurance averages \$1,022 per year, home heating average is \$1,062 per year, for a taxpayer who earns \$20,000 per year.

In Saskatchewan, those comparative same items cost: nothing for medicare, \$459 for car insurance and \$650 per year for home heating for the same family. That's a difference, Mr. Speaker, of \$1,689.

Where privatization flourishes in Ontario, car insurance, home heating, and medicare premiums cost just under \$2,800, or 250 per cent more — 250 per cent more for a family of four, according to the Conservative minister's own figures, than in Saskatchewan. Yet Ontario is the place where privatization flourishes — 252 per cent more to families for those three basic requirements.

Why then do we have to pay so much more? You can go through the figures in the government's own records which show that for those items necessary to life, they all cost more under privatization where privatization is the rule, and that's the fact of life.

Up until now, budget day in fact, we thought we still had control over that part of our economy in which we had a say, but we don't any more. Just watch those health costs and car insurance costs and home heating costs sky-rocket as the building blocks of our economy are cut, stacked, and sold on the auction block of privatization.

It's a truth that when you no longer have access to the decisions which affect your life, it's going to cost you more. Up until now, Conservatives have been afraid to tamper with those vital industries and services created by the tears and hard work of countless thousands of Saskatchewan people. Now they've gone the whole hog, and the costs, the costs to ordinary people will be unbelievable. I predict this without fear of contradiction in the future.

Mr. Speaker, selling off valuable assets and being in debt like this Conservative government is, is a little like the carpenter who falls on hard financial times. He sells his tools here and there to help his cash flow. Then he has a chance to build a house and make some money, but he doesn't own his tools any more. And because he's in debt and has spent his money, he can't buy any tools either. So he goes to those people he sold the tools to and asks them to loan them to him. And they won't, so he offers to rent the tools back. You can guess how much he's going to pay and still not own his own tools.

Privatization or piratization is making us strangers in our own province. Privatization is making us tenants in our own house. It's taking away our individual freedom to have some say in what we pay for our resources and services, which we in Saskatchewan created. It's making us pitiful creatures of the corporate state, unable to decide anything except by permission of our corporate bosses.

Mr. Speaker, our parents and grandparents didn't come to this country and struggle to establish homes to see them owned by absentee landlords and their children governed by a Conservative aristocracy. No, they came here to escape those very things.

Today a great sadness grips our people. Their government has not only lost touch with them but is hell-bent on selling them down the river. We look at, Mr. Speaker, exactly what this privatization means. I've given you an example with the carpenter. I'll give you a business example.

When a business is in trouble it looks at the assets that it has, it does an inventory, and it decides what assets to sell, what revenue-bearing assets to sell in that business, to meet the credit that is due on the business. So the business sells off all its assets, and once the economy turns around or once the cash flow problem is solved, what is there left to do? The carpenter illustration shows very clearly what the options are: pay high rent for your tools to earn money that you will never own, to earn money, maybe.

With regard to business, once you sell off your assets and you've got no more revenue-generating assets, like Crown corporations, all you have is the ability to tax people for revenues to run your government. And that's what this government is planning on doing through their successive budgets and their deficit financing.

We on this side of the House will not let that happen. We intend to fight every inch of the way to protect the birthright of Saskatchewan people. Who will stand up for Saskatchewan in this fight? Not that government opposite. New Democrats have in the past, and will stand up for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We have stood up in the past; we will continue to stand up for our people in the future, in particular when it comes to protecting our children's assets and freedoms and our way of life.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Premier and his government began in 1982 with strong principles. Everyone who is new at something should begin with strong principles and keep them, but the Premier and his government haven't let those principles take root. Conservative principles are

like flowers planted by children. Every now and then the children pull them up to see if they're growing. And if you don't like their principles of this government, they have others. Whatever it takes to fool you is what they will adopt as their very own.

Let me briefly give you some examples and outline the lack of credibility and principles of this government. Example one. When they came to power, they said they were going to introduce a public utilities review commission to make sure Saskatchewan people got a fair deal on utility rates. When the public utility review commission began to do its job and point out that, in fact, the government was doing exactly the opposite, Conservatives scrapped PURC (public utilities review commission). So much for principles. In fact, Mr. Speaker, utility rates are up \$519 from '81 to '87 for a family of four with a net income of \$25,000. Utility rates have more than doubled after a promise to freeze them.

Second example. They talked about tax decreases, and you remember the speech that I've given before on tax decreases. The Conservatives, during the campaign, promised to cut personal income tax by 10 per cent. We have seen a 56 per cent increase — not decrease, but increase — in personal taxes in the last while, and 103 per cent increase over the last six years of this government. They promised to eliminate the sales tax, and of course that principle is gone. We have not seen the sales tax eliminated; we have seen an increase of 40 per cent, from 5 per cent to 7 per cent.

They promised to do away with the gas tax, and the Premier of this province, principles all aglow, stood out in front of this Legislative Assembly in May of 1982, and he promised to the people of this province that as long as there's a Conservative government in this province, you will never, ever see the reimposition of the gas tax. What do we have now? We have a gas tax, Mr. Speaker.

They promised, Mr. Speaker, to do away with bureaucratic red tape — promise after promise. What do we have? We have the largest bureaucratic, red tape nightmare in the history of the world — 641,000 licensed vehicle operators now gather together their receipts on an annual basis and generate 33 million gas tax receipts or thereabouts. That's doing away with red tape? You've got to be kidding! People are laughing at this government. This is a Premier of principles who promises less red tape?

The drug plan — this created more red tape for every citizen in this province who is over 18 years of age or live on their own. This is the PC Party of principles? People are laughing at this government and the use of the words "trust" and "credibility" and "principles."

My final example, Mr. Speaker, is that this government said they would never, never touch those areas which affect the health of Saskatchewan people; then you check the record. Where's the dental program for children? Privatized. Gone. Where's the prescription drug plan? Where is that, Mr. Speaker? It's privatized; it's gone. Where is the promise of lower nursing home rates? Gone. Instead crippling increases for seniors. Where's the easy access to hospitals promise? That's gone too. Instead we have record-sized waiting lists for people who have to get

into hospitals. And where's the Saskatchewan medical care insurance commission, Mr. Speaker? That's gone as well. And the list can go on all afternoon. This is a government of principles or trust?

(1630)

But of course, now it's budget time, now it's budget time, and this government now tells us they really, really are going to build hospitals and new nursing homes. Trust us, they say. We have principles, the Conservatives say, but what they don't tell you, it's just that our principles keep changing. That's what they don't tell you.

It seems this government has just never learned that you can't keep switching what you believe. You can't run a government solely on business principles. Government should be a little more human and a little more humane. It should have a heart. But this PC government has neither a heart nor competence nor principles.

The lack of credibility, about which you can believe from this PC government, is never more obvious than when it talks about the so-called free trade issue. In the budget speech, the Minister of Finance blithely states, and I quote:

we believe that the free trade agreement and the diversification of the Saskatchewan economy are the most realistic approaches to deal with the changes occurring in the world economy, and this practical strategy provides us with the means to control our future in uncertain economy times.

That's the stated principle Conservatives stand on with respect to free trade.

But let's examine what this really means to people here. As I have already pointed out, Mr. Speaker, due to cut-backs, sell-outs of our fundamental means of production, and private contracting of services to outside agencies and corporations by this government, we don't even control what we pay for car insurance, home insurance, prescription drugs, or any of the most basic items. Our ability to have a say in anything we used to own is gone.

An American giant corporation, Weyerhaeuser, headquartered in Washington, effectively controls our forest industry. Outside foreign corporations now control the marketing of our mineral wealth. U.S. drug companies monopolize the prescription drug market and drive the prices up. Farmers are captive of the chemical corporations and banks, and that list can go on. So how is it that we are supposed to negotiate fair trade deals under this agreement for Saskatchewan people? The Premier is betting on free trade with an empty hand.

How in Heaven's name do you, in the words of the Minister of Finance, and I quote, "capture economic opportunities in the international market place", when it's that very international market place that already owns your resources and services? Are these Conservatives on drugs when they're talking about that? Or do you make deals with people . . . and how do you make deals with people when they already own what you have? It's one or

the other. Yet even we accept this convoluted nonsense crafted by Conservatives.

There's another very important factor in the free trade issue. The best way to see it is to take the example of the oil company tax holiday this Conservative government has provided to these corporations. In 1981 the value of oil production was \$821 million. The province received, out of \$821 million, they received a royalty of \$533 million. In 1986, the value of oil production in Saskatchewan was \$1,174 million — an increase of 43 per cent. 1986-87 revenues were only 213 million, not 533 million — \$320 million less, or 60 per cent less revenue on 43 per cent increase in production. It's fine to say there's more activity in the oil patch and a paltry few more jobs, but when the people who own the resource are getting less than half the returns from over \$300 million more in oil production, how is that benefitting Saskatchewan, I ask you? Well it's not. Saskatchewan people who now pay the second highest personal income tax in Canada know these kinds of deals don't benefit them.

What is more important is when you examine all of these so-called deals this government has made with corporations from outside this province. You begin to see what Conservatives really aren't very good at, and that is business deals. Either that, or they have some plan in mind. And I believe both of those observations to be true, Mr. Speaker.

Isn't it interesting that with all the tax holidays for these foreign corporations, corporate taxes account for only 6.2 per cent of budgetary revenues while individual income taxes account for a whopping 23 per cent, almost four times as much? Did you get a \$10 million tax break like Peter Pocklington did this year? Did anyone out here in this province? No! Instead taxpayers got a 33 per cent increase in flat tax. Seniors, on top of that, get a \$15 per month increase starting in November, and of course the flat tax is levied before family-personal deductions, so you can imagine where that \$15 to seniors will end up — right back in the coffers of the Conservative government. No principles, Mr. Speaker. Not only can Conservatives not make good deals for the people who live here, I submit it is not in their best interests to make good deals for them.

At a rapid pace through a combination of cut-backs, sell-outs, mismanagement, patronage and pure unmitigated greed and lack of principle, this Conservative government would force us into a free trade deal where the Saskatchewan people would be the only team playing without a goalie. Not only would the Saskatchewan people be playing without a goalie, we'll have to buy our sticks and our pucks and other hockey equipment from the opposing team. That's the free trade deal for the people of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, this most recent budget of this Conservative government, coupled with secret, closed-door deals with corporations and other governments, has put our Saskatchewan and its people at grave and certain risk. Still, these Conservative puppets of privatization, cling to their delusion that only foreign, or large national, or international corporations and businesses make the

decisions; not people, not Saskatchewan people, not Saskatchewan people elected by Saskatchewan people for Saskatchewan people, but people outside this province and outside Canada, the Conservatives submit, can make and govern for us — make better decisions and govern for us.

Every major policy of this government has been crafted in some large corporate boardroom, not this legislature or in the PC cabinet room. This government reminds me of the lines from Alexander Pope, and I quote:

Of all the causes which conspire to blind  
Man's erring judgement, and misguide the mind,  
What the weak head but strongest bias rules,  
Is pride, the never-failing vice of fools.

And that's Conservatives — weak heads but strong biases, coupled with pride, the never-failing vice of fools.

I have said that this government once again wishes to place the burden of our broken economy on the backs of the people who live here. Our problems are caused by others in the world, they say, time after time. But Conservatives have destroyed the historic consensus which protected the lives and security of Saskatchewan families.

Conservatives are involved in a conspiracy to surrender control of our economy to others who do not live here or who are not accountable to Saskatchewan people. Privatization, a free trade agreement, and blind support of this free trade agreement are weapons in the Conservative strategy to permanently divide the families of this province and divest the province of control over its destiny.

Conservatives have sought advice from right-wing foreign governments in South Africa and Britain, large national and international corporations, and others outside Saskatchewan for their grand plan. Window dressing contained in the budget cannot cover the fact that Conservatives have failed to deal with problems at home. They lack principles, they lack credibility, they lack competence, and ultimately, Mr. Speaker, they will lack the support of the Saskatchewan people come the next election.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Solomon:** — Conservatives continue to maintain we can get a fair deal through the free trade agreement, when we have nothing left to deal with and no control over any aspect of our lives.

Mr. Speaker, it's my view that this government has evil purposes in mind. It seeks to divide rather than to unite. It does not have the fortitude and competence to build on our strengths, but instead it builds up our reliance on large corporations so we are never able to make important economic decisions for ourselves again.

This budget is a hopeless failure in resolving our economic problems, but will be a very large success in gathering millions from Saskatchewan taxpayers and helping the friends of the PCs pay less.

Because of this slanderous and totally incompetent budget, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support it and I will not support it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise and enter into this debate on the budget, the budget that has been presented by my colleague, the Minister of Finance and the member for Qu'Appelle-Lumsden. I certainly would like to congratulate that member for what I feel is probably the most comprehensive and the most common sense budget that has been presented in this legislature for some time.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this budget is more than just a statement of economics or a statement of fiscal responsibility. It is a very, very detailed budget, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to advance to you, and to members of the Legislative Assembly, the argument that this budget represents a balance, a balance of choices for the people of Saskatchewan — a balance of choices with a bottom line, with a bottom line that will lead us, not just into the next year or two but well into the next decade.

And if you look closely at what we are debating today, Mr. Speaker, amongst the economic difficulties that we have here in Saskatchewan, you'll find that we, as a province, we face issues of which we have to prudently — prudently plan for the future. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite certainly have a different view.

The members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, tend to live in the past. I believe that their comments thus far on this budget would indicate clearly to the people of Saskatchewan that the NDP still today are living in the past, are coming up with solutions that . . . the same old solutions that they attempted to come up with in the last few years of their administration, Mr. Speaker. And those types of solutions, Mr. Speaker, were rejected, and rejected solidly by the people of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — What we have heard from the opposition, Mr. Speaker, is a litany of what I would call scare tactics — scare tactics that affect the elderly, scare tactics that affect the youth of our province, scare tactics that affect the small-business people in our province, and just generally very negative, negative comments by the opposition. They have not offered any new solutions, Mr. Speaker. But I would put forth the case to you, Mr. Speaker, that this budget, as presented, does offer many, many new solutions to the problems that we as Saskatchewan people face today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan realize that difficult choices have to be made. They expect their government to make those difficult choices. But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan want this government to make those choices in a caring and a compassionate manner. They expect the choices that we make, that these choices will keep in mind the

economic realities of today, the economic realities that are, right as we speak, reshaping our way of thinking in this country.

By virtue of this budget, Mr. Speaker, this government has once again served notice that it is prepared to make those difficult choices. But more importantly, this government is prepared to allocate financial and human resources in such a manner that we will be well prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities which the future holds. This budget represents much of that, Mr. Speaker, and in short, it has leadership. It is leadership that is needed to take our province into the 21st century. That type of leadership, Mr. Speaker, does not exist on the other side of the House. But on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, leadership is something that we have plenty of, and this budget proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that we do have leadership on this side of the House.

I wish not, Mr. Speaker, to go into a detailed description of the budget itself, but I would like to leave that to my colleagues and their respective departments and the respective MLAs to speak forth on this budget, how it affects them. But, Mr. Speaker, what I will do today is go through in detail some of the highlights of the budget as it relates to Highways and Transportation.

(1645)

Highways and Transportation of course, Mr. Speaker, is a very important department in our government, and this year's budget for Highways and Transportation is indeed a very, very important budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you a little bit about the highway system that we have in the province of Saskatchewan. It is an extensive highway system, Mr. Speaker, and in that highway system the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan, have invested some five and a half billion dollars. In the province of Saskatchewan, I believe, we have something like 20-some thousand kilometres of road throughout this large geographic province of ours, probably, Mr. Speaker, more miles of road per capita than any place probably in North America.

Mr. Speaker, this budget addresses many of the concerns that we have with that extensive highway system. You heard, Mr. Speaker, just last Thursday, the Minister of finance announce a new \$30 million enhanced highway rehabilitation program. And, Mr. Speaker, that \$30 million enhanced highway rehabilitation program has been met from the people of Saskatchewan with a great deal of optimism.

The people of Saskatchewan, the members on this side of the House, are pleased and are happy with an extra \$30 million over a three-year period of time going into our extensive highway system. It is with a great deal of pride, Mr. Speaker, that I listened to that announcement. I believe that there is no one in this province who is a bigger advocate or who has been more outspoken than I on getting more money for our highways, Mr. Speaker, we accomplished that as a government, we accomplished that together, and those moneys will go a long, long ways to fixing our highway system.

I'm not about to tell you, Mr. Speaker, or the people of this province, that that extra \$30 million is going to clear up all of the difficulties that we have in Highways. But, Mr. Speaker, it is a good start — it is a good start on rehabilitating or resurfacing some of the many, many paved highways that we have in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — Mr. Speaker, specifically, that program will allow the department to undertake more than 50 new projects, additional projects in the next three years. This year alone that new program will improve some 138 kilometres of road, and it will create some 600 jobs. This is, Mr. Speaker, of course in addition to the department's \$101.3 million construction program. Projects from the enhancement program and the 30 projects in the regular construction program provide for a total of \$46 million for pavement rehabilitation this year. It is fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that this program represents a firm commitment by this government to continue to invest in our province's highway system during difficult economic times.

This year's total budget for Highways and Transportation is an amount in excess of \$231 million. It includes \$101 million construction program, over 87 and one-half million dollars for maintenance, and an additional \$10 million from this new, enhanced highway program.

Saskatchewan motorists, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan tourists, the road building industry, the Saskatchewan transportation industry, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, all people in the province of Saskatchewan, will benefit from this budget.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands the importance of our provincial highway system. It is illustrated in this year's very extensive capital program. And I wish to give to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the Legislative Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan, some of the highlights of that program. There will be 30 grading projects, 61 surfacing projects, 18 bridge project, in fact, Mr. Speaker, more than 1,000 kilometres will be under construction this fiscal year.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — This year, Mr. Speaker, you will see more and more of that yellow iron out working in rural Saskatchewan and in parts of urban Saskatchewan building roads.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that most of this construction will be done by private sector firms. And I, at this time, Mr. Speaker, would like to pay tribute to the private sector firms that we have in the province of Saskatchewan, building our roads, reconstructing our roads, resurfacing our roads. These contractors, Mr. Speaker, have invested millions of dollars in their equipment. These contractors, Mr. Speaker, have had years and years and years of experience, Mr. Speaker, these contractors themselves are facing difficult times, very difficult times.

There is no business today, I don't think, any more



competitive than the road building industry itself. Mr. Speaker, these jobs are tendered out. These jobs are tendered out through fair, competitive tender bidding. And, Mr. Speaker, today the province of Saskatchewan, because of the competitive nature of that industry, are getting good value for their dollar on the roads that are constructed today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — Mr. Speaker, it would take me a long time to go through the complete project array. I will be tabling that, probably some time tomorrow, but I would like to share with you and share with the members of the legislature a few of the highlights of this construction program.

This year you can expect the completion of many, many important construction projects. Firstly, the paving of the four-laning projects on the Yellowhead east of Lloydminster, as well as 16 kilometres west of Saskatoon; in addition, the 23-kilometre extension of the four-laning on the Trans-Canada west of Swift Current to Gull Lake will be completed. The grading of the remaining section of No. 41 Highway to Melfort will continue early this spring, and we will hope that the Melfort to Saskatoon connection will be open for traffic late this fall. Resurfacing 50 kilometres along Highway No. 10 between Balgonie and Fort Qu'Appelle as well as Highway No. 210 from the junction of Highway 10 to Echo Valley Provincial Park will take place.

Mr. Speaker, construction of the new interchange at the intersection of No. 2 and 3 Highways north of Prince Albert will be completed this fall, and it shall be open to traffic some time in November. That new interchange, Mr. Speaker, provides easier access to highways both east and west of the city, and will greatly improve safety in the area of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, the list of projects, once again, is extensive. I do have a project listing that will be tabled tomorrow in the legislature, and I do know that many MLAs will be looking forward to viewing that construction project array.

You will notice in that array, Mr. Speaker, that there is a continued emphasis on the resurfacing of our paved highway system. In keeping with my comments on the highway system, Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn to the maintenance programs contained in the Highways and Transportation budget.

On several occasions in this address I've stressed the need for this government to maintain the system that we have, maintain the paved highway system in which we, as people in the province of Saskatchewan, have invested billions of dollars. There is a need to resurface those paved highways, and this government will do that, Mr. Speaker.

The first step in protecting that highway system, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that essential maintenance is carried out. This budget contains provisions for 87 and one-half million dollars for that purpose alone. To demonstrate our commitment to maintaining our highways, the dollar

figure for this year's maintenance budget represents a 28 per cent increase since 1982.

This government, Mr. Speaker, is committed to protecting the highway system and maintaining the level of service that the Saskatchewan public has come to enjoy, and that proof of commitment is in the funding level for highways maintenance in this budget.

And at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to another sector that works on our highways, and this is the public sector, Mr. Speaker, that is working on the . . . primarily on the maintenance side of our highways.

Mr. Speaker, we have in the Department of Highways and Transportation some 2,000 employees. Many of these are in head office, Mr. Speaker, but many of them are the men and the women who are out working on our highways in a maintenance capacity. I speak of the crews that are out mowing the grass; I speak of the crews that are doing the spot sealing; I speak of the crews that are doing the crack filling; I speak of the crews that do the snow blowing in the winter, putting the sand and the salt on our highways.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have come to learn, I have come to learn, Mr. Speaker, that those public employees do an excellent job for the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — Those public employees, Mr. Speaker, take a great deal of pride in their work, and I know that they do a very, very good job.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there should be and there is a good mix in this province, Mr. Speaker, of work that is carried out by the private sector and other maintenance work that is done by the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House tend to think of the taxpayer and tend to look at the taxpayer and what is the cheapest for the taxpayer. And, Mr. Speaker, frankly I think we have found that balance where we have mostly professional, private sector road contractors building our highways through true competitive bidding, and we have public employees, Mr. Speaker, providing certain levels of maintenance. It is a good mix, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that our transportation system is getting better every day, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — But, Mr. Speaker, there is more to a transportation system than simply highways. And I'd like to share with members of this Assembly some of the facts about our highway system . . . about our transportation system, pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

The average cost of transporting most goods in Canada is about 6 per cent of their market price. But in Saskatchewan, for our major exports, that corresponding figure is 23 per cent, and of course that is due to our geographic location. But that is almost a four-fold difference or a four-fold difference in the average cost of transportation as a percentage of market price. And, Mr. Speaker, that figure alone demonstrates the key

importance that a transportation system plays in keeping a competitive edge in the world market-place.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this government we welcome, we welcome federal reform of the legislative framework that guides our national transportation system. That is why Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, has gained a national reputation for being a leader in the implementation of reform and finding new and more efficient ways of delivering transportation services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time detailing this government's position on a number of issues related to the changing regulatory environment. This budget supports a number, a number of innovative solutions that Highways and Transportation has developed to meet the challenges that lie ahead. First and foremost is the new National Transportation Act. It is a very innovative piece of legislation. This new Act recognizes the role of transportation in economic development. It also ensures that there will be continued access and reasonable rates for the northern areas of our province.

As a government, Mr. Speaker, we made our concerns known through public hearings, public hearing process that we are well satisfied that our input has been favourably received. We will monitor the effects of that new National Transportation Act to ensure that it is protecting Saskatchewan's interests.

In conjunction with the new National Transportation Act, there is another major piece of federal legislation affecting the motor transport industry, that is Bill C-19. Shippers and manufacturers have advocated a relaxation in motor carrier regulations in order to increase competition and reduce rates. All provinces and the federal government, Mr. Speaker, have agreed to relax the control on extra-provincial trucking. Bill C-19 puts the legislative framework in place so that this may happen. The budget that we debate today will not let safety be sacrificed for the sake of less regulation, and to that end, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to a national safety code. This budget provides for the human and the financial resources for that to take place.

Another important step that is currently being accomplished is the development of a national set of uniform weight and dimension truck regulations. The federal and the provincial governments, along with the trucking industry, jointly funded a \$3 million research program to improve uniformity in Canada trucking regulations and to promote highway safety. That study focused on the influence of size and weight on truck stability and their impacts on our pavements and on our bridges. Interested groups, individuals, and the public, had an opportunity to provide comments on the report through a series of public hearings, and it's very important to note, Mr. Speaker, that the very first of those Canada-wide public hearings was held here in Saskatchewan.

In February, the council of ministers responsible for transportation and highway safety met and they discussed a number of issues facing the transportation industry. At the meeting each of the speakers agreed to adopt uniform commercial vehicle weight and dimension regulations

right across the entire country. That agreement that was reached will improve highway safety and reduce the wear on Canada's road system. By establishing the minimum level of weights and dimensions nation-wide, productivity of the interprovincial trucking industry will improve significantly.

But, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about these types of reforms that we have made, but a very important point, Mr. Speaker — and I ask the people of Saskatchewan to bear this in mind, a very important point, Mr. Speaker — is that when you take a look at uniform weights and dimensions across this country, when you take a look at a new national safety code for the trucking industry right across this country, when you take a look at the new less regulated environment in the transportation industry across this country, what you are seeing, Mr. Speaker, is co-operation, co-operation between the federal government and the provincial governments right across this country. And, Mr. Speaker, we certainly can say that there has been some things that we disliked that happened in Ottawa, and the members of the opposition can blow those out of proportion, but the fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that there are some fundamental things within the highways and transportation sector that this government in co-operation with all governments across the country and the federal government have worked on that are, too, very, very significant benefits for the people across this country. It has been a long time in history, Mr. Speaker, when there has been a federal government that co-operates with the provincial governments right across this country and has some solid benefits to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.