

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, some guests seated in your gallery. We have a number of guests, but a couple of special guests from my constituency that I would like to introduce to you.

First, I would like to introduce Mr. Rod Boll — and I would ask him to stand — who is a distinguished athlete from Fillmore, in an area that a lot of people aren't all that familiar with, Mr. Speaker, and that's trap-shooting. He's been in trap-shooting since 1970. During that time and since that time, he has won numerous provincial and Canadian titles, and last August, Mr. Speaker, in Ohio, Rod defeated over 5,500 other competitors from all over the world by hitting an unbelievable 400 out of 400 targets. For this achievement Rod was named "Champion of champions." He has also been recognized in Saskatchewan here as being named as runner-up athlete of the year for Saskatchewan, and indeed some several months ago the entire community of Fillmore and surrounding areas hosted a banquet in his honour.

Secondly, I would like to ask Yvonne Wenaus to rise and be recognized by the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. She too is from Fillmore and was a nominee for the Rural Woman of the Year in recognition of the tremendous amount of volunteer work she has given to her community over the years in the area of sport and recreation. It doesn't really matter what project is under way in Fillmore and area, indeed in southern Saskatchewan, whether it be curling or baseball or helping with the children in the area, Yvonne Wenaus is a dynamo of energy and enthusiasm in this area, Mr. Speaker. And as well, the Minister of Parks and Recreation presented Yvonne with a volunteer recognition award to that end.

I would like for all members of the Assembly to welcome these special guests, and I would ask the rest of the people from Fillmore and area who have joined us here today to stand up and be acknowledged as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Koenker:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you today to members of the Assembly, guests from Saskatoon — Mr. Jake Bergen, who is seated in your gallery, who is a long-term resident of the Sutherland constituency; and Al and Ollie Miller, who are part of the pastoral team at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Saskatoon. And I'd ask all members to welcome them here today.

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Job Creation Programs

**Mr. Romanow:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Deputy Premier, in the absence of the Premier. It concerns the statistics of his own government which indicate that in February of this year, just a few months ago, approximately 6,200 people left the province of Saskatchewan in what can only be described as a very startling and shocking situation.

My question to you, sir, is this: why was it that in the face of this statistic, this alarming development, that the budget of last week had no specific game plan for job creation for the people of this province? Where are the jobs in order to keep the people here in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for Human Resources, Labour and Employment, I am pleased to answer that question.

First of all, there was a lot in the budget for employment and diversification. The only fact is that the Leader of the Opposition didn't recognize it, Mr. Speaker. That's the first problem.

The second explanation is this: the fact that we are losing people from Saskatchewan is all the more reason for this government to proceed with full haste in public participation and diversification, to do away with the old policies of Crown corporations, and allow the people to do business and employ each other.

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question. I guess it's to the minister in charge of labour and manpower. My question to the minister is this: your answer is proof positive of the total failure of privatization, the fact that 16,000 people have left this province last year alone . . .

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — . . . 16,000 people, Mr. Minister, have left Saskatchewan. That's the equivalent size of the city of Swift Current. Your colleague ought to be concerned about that — gone, just like that.

My question to you specifically is this: why wasn't there a job creation game plan in the Minister of Finance's budget? We desperately need it; we need jobs for our young people and for the people of this province. Why did you ignore it?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was against Cameco moving their head office to Saskatchewan and being a public corporation; he was against that. They were against the mining of uranium and the increase and the size of the uranium company in Saskatoon. They're against the new jobs at Weyerhaeuser. They're against WESTBRIDGE Computer Corporation, which has now got public participation, as

the fastest growing computer company in Canada. They're against all those things.

They don't know that Dominion Bridge is reopening its plant here as a result of the policies of this government. We know what the members opposite are against. What are they for? Mr. Speaker, that's the question. What are they for?

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the Minister of Labour. He asks the question, what it is that the opposition is for? Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the minister, as a preface to this question, the opposition is for jobs, for young people, for the future of this province.

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — And my question to the minister is very simple. My question to him is this: how is it, Mr. Minister, in the light of this great big description of job creation that you've just given us, how is it that we had 16,000 people leave the province last year alone? Why is it, in the face of your recitation of facts, that we had 6,200 leave in February alone? That doesn't square with your statistics. How do you explain that?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, manufacturing jobs are up by 4,000. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition doesn't realize that those are jobs, jobs for young people, people of all ages.

Yes, jobs in agriculture are down. Maybe he doesn't know in his theory of economics why they might be down. Maybe he doesn't understand you need rain. Maybe he doesn't understand that there is a grain war on between Europe and the United States. Maybe that's why he's in opposition, because when I told him years and years ago how to diversify Saskatchewan, he insisted on buying holes in the ground, and now, Mr. Speaker, he says he doesn't recall me telling him that. That only proves that he wasn't listening.

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the minister. I don't recall not having listened to the minister a number of years ago, but if I didn't, his answer today confirms why I didn't then also.

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — My new question to the minister is this, Mr. Speaker. In the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* in a story which is headlined: "The province's fastest growing export; its people", the following is said:

"Sagging confidence in Saskatchewan's economy is what's driving residents out of the province in such large numbers," says Regina economics trend watcher, Doug Elliott. "There's a perception that, relative to other provinces, Saskatchewan doesn't hold a lot of opportunity for people," Mr.

Elliott said, the editor and publisher of *Sask-Trends Monitor*.

Now those aren't the words of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Minister. Those are the words of an economist and a trends watcher who says that the people in this country and in this province have lost confidence in this government to create jobs.

My question to you, sir, is this: why haven't you taken some initiative; why haven't you urged your Minister of Finance colleague to start doing the things which the people of this province want us to do, namely to create jobs here at home rather than privatization and privatization? Let's get on with that job.

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition quotes somebody, an economist somebody-or-other.

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — ... (inaudible) ... Leader of the Opposition look at what the Conference of Board of Canada has to say about Saskatchewan. I'm sure he's heard of the Conference Board of Canada. This is not some economist who we've never heard of. The Conference Board of Canada says Saskatchewan, with a little rain, will have a growth rate of 8.8 per cent next year. That is quite impressive.

He's never heard of the companies that are diversifying in Saskatchewan through Buy Saskatchewan and public participation. He's never heard of Northern Reel of Moose Jaw supplying reels to Phillips Cable, which is another diversification in Moose Jaw. He's never heard of Hydro-Mech Services of North Battleford, supplying treated water for the Shand project. He's never heard of Vicwest Steel of Saskatoon — roof decking for the Shand power project. He's never heard of Metal-Masters of Regina — metal cabinets. The list goes on and on. He doesn't think these are jobs because they're not in his Crown corporation. This is a Conservative family here, not the NDP family, and this family will deal in business and jobs and not in buying holes in the ground.

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

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, I address my question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, the people of Saskatchewan recognize very clearly that your government's privatization plans have failed and are failing the people of this province. Never before have I heard a government state that its official policy for job creation is rain. And I ask you — I ask you, Mr. Minister — will you recognize reality? Will you recognize that over the past two years the province of Saskatchewan has seen a steady decline in our population — a steady decline — and we have now fallen, we have now fallen below the one million figure for the population of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Minister, when will you recognize that the situation is grim? When will you recognize that the situation today under your government is as bad as it ever was under the

Dirty Thirties — in the Dirty Thirties in the province of Saskatchewan? And I ask you, sir: when will you and your government cut the rhetoric and start cutting the mustard for the people of Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, how can you answer a question like that? Was that a question? The member from Moose Jaw North . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — The member for Moose Jaw North is against rain. Maybe he doesn't need rain on his lawn, but we need rain on the fields of this province. I drove into Regina today and I saw no run-off. I saw no water in the sloughs. I don't know where the ducks . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. I believe the minister is being interrupted just a bit too frequently, and he has the right to be heard, and I wish to hear him and all members wish to hear him. Let's give him that opportunity.

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the policy of this government is quite clear: we will provide jobs through greater economic growth, and that growth will come through public participation; that's the people owning this province, and therefore we will have diversification. We acknowledge that we still need the help of God and that we still need rain. The NDP are against everything, including jobs and uranium, including jobs at a power plant, including jobs in all parts of Saskatchewan. The members opposite are critical of everything, including a request for rain, but they have no policy whatsoever — none.

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

**Mr. Hagel:** — New question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. When the government's new plans, new initiatives for jobs are rain, Mr. Minister, I think the people of Saskatchewan would be extremely interested in just what your government has budgeted to create that most valuable substance.

But let me share with you, sir, let me share with you some facts, some undeniable facts, the source of which is your government, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, fact — over 6,200 people net loss in population in February alone; fact — 43,000 unemployed in this province and looking for work in February; fact — 21,000 net loss in population over the past 14 months; fact — had those 21,000 stayed home and looked for work in their home province of Saskatchewan, we would have an unemployment rate in this province of 14 per cent, one in seven looking for work in this province.

And I ask you sir: in light of those facts — and don't give me your piratization hog-wash; it's obviously not working — what new initiatives, besides praying for rain, does your government have in mind to create jobs for the young people of Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say that praying for rain will be more effective than going back to socialism which the entire world is denouncing.

Mikhail Gorbachev announced last week that he was going to abolish the Soviet land bank built on the deaths of 13 million Ukrainian farmers in the 1930s. He's going to abolish the last land bank in the world. And I would submit that praying for rain will go a lot further than going back to socialism.

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

### Opportunities '89 Program

**Mr. Shillington:** — I want to ask the minister in charge of rain — I guess it would be as appropriate a description as any.

I want to narrow the focus if I could, Mr. Minister, for a moment. The group of people who are perhaps most hardest hit by your failure to act, is young people. I remind you, Mr. Minister, that the unemployment rate for young people in the province is seventeen and a half per cent.

Mr. Minister, in light of those figures which ought to embarrass you, why is it that you've cut a million dollars or about a thousand jobs from the Opportunities '89 program?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite don't want to hear about the 200 jobs-plus, 200 jobs at Gainers. They don't want to hear about the manufacturing jobs at Hunter's. They don't want to hear about any of the diversification that is owned by the people of Saskatchewan, either in corporations or individually. They don't want to listen to this, nor do they want to add and subtract. I will give them an opportunity to do their basic mathematics.

With respect to the Opportunities '89 program, we have budgeted the exact amount that was spent last year. It is only a matter of honesty to budget what you need. Last year showed we needed \$3.1 million, and we've budgeted that amount. That's the actual expenditure from last year. If there is a greater uptake, we could reconsider it. But we're going on the basis of last year's figures.

So if they want to deal in paper transactions, we are talking about actual jobs, and last year was a good year for jobs for students in this province.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, a new question. I want to thank the minister for the lesson in grade 3 math.

Let me give you some assistance with the program. Mr. Minister, the reason why nobody took it up was because you cut from the program, you restricted it and made it not available to local governments or NGOs (non-governmental organizations). That's why nobody took it up, Mr. Minister.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — So the obvious question is, Mr. Minister, will you re-establish the effectiveness of the program and make it available to local governments and NGOs and put some more money in it so the program will work?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, there's the NDP solution to everything. When the province already has a deficit and we don't want to raise taxes, they want us to go and spend money that's not needed. The municipalities have operated with their usual budget. The non-governmental organizations are contracting agencies, most of them, 200 of them with my Department of Social Services. We provide them a contract fee.

The solution to economic growth is not pouring public money onto projects. The solution is to build sustainable economic growth through business and agriculture. That is the solution.

And the members opposite say, ah, we have a deficit, taxes are too high, and their solution is, let's just throw money on the problem and it'll go away. That is not the solution. The solution is long-term and we are dealing with it.

**Mr. Shillington:** — I gather, Mr. Speaker, the members don't want to applaud any more than that. I want to commiserate with the member. You said you didn't want to raise taxes. Well last week must have been an absolutely tragic week for you, Mr. Minister.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Minister, I want to remind you of the results of your diversification — 43,000 people unemployed, 6,000 a month fleeing from your economic success. I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you'd take some of the facts into account and if you'd agree to provide some effective programs to create jobs for young people in this province.

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the facts are that while some people are leaving Saskatchewan, the number of jobs . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — The number of jobs in manufacturing in the last year is up 4,000 jobs in a time when agriculture has suffered a lot. We have lost jobs in agriculture. The members opposite don't acknowledge that rain has anything to do with agriculture. That tells me they have no agriculture policy because they don't understand agriculture. They don't understand manufacturing because they don't understand the significance of 4,000 new jobs. They're opposed to Cameco (Canadian Mining Energy Corporation) in uranium. They're opposed to Weyerhaeuser in paper. They're opposed to everything that makes money in this

province. It's all they're in favour of is spending money, and then they wonder why there's a deficit. Our policy is not throwing away money that you don't have. Our policy is, this province has to earn money and then we'll spend the money.

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

### Budget for Education

**Ms. Atkinson:** — My question is to the Minister of Education. And we've just heard the minister in charge of out-migration tell us that this government doesn't have money for young people's employment.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to talk about a place where you could find the money. You will know that on the weekend, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation overwhelmingly voted to urge your government to cancel your \$9 million birthday party.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Saskatchewan taxpayers, along with teachers and rural municipal councillors, are opposed to \$9 million of our money going to your political birthday party. Have you taken the advice of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation to heart, and will you take their urgings to your cabinet ministers and ask them to cancel the birthday party?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — No, Mr. Speaker, and the reason why I would not is this. The \$9 million expenditure in the Future Corporation, a lot of that, Mr. Speaker, is going to be spent on the students of this province and on their education. Now the fact that the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) has the resolution or the story comes forward, it tells me what we have to do as a government is explain to the teachers and others across the province what we are doing there.

The very first project that was announced under the Future Corporation that they may not be aware of, Mr. Speaker, was one indeed for our school children. Many more projects will be announced in the future. I think that's not well understood, because one of our major focuses there, Mr. Speaker, is our children, and them taking their place in the world of the future, its technological world of the future, projects that will appeal to their inquiring minds. Mr. Speaker, that's why.

Because we consider our children's futures important, Mr. Speaker, we will be funding projects in education through that corporation. And, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly that's why this government has doubled the amount of money we spent on our children's education since the turn of this decade, Mr. Speaker. We consider them important.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, your government only increased school board operating grants by less than

4 per cent. Now for literally dozens of school boards across Saskatchewan that, in fact, means a cut; they have had their school grants cut. In particular, the Saskatoon public school board has had, in the last two years, an \$800,000 cut in grants from your government, and in this year alone it's a \$400,000 cut. That means that Saskatoon local taxpayers will have to pick up the shortfall.

Now I think any reasonable person, Mr. Minister, would say that your government should cut the \$9 million for the political birthday party and put that money into schools. Now, Mr. Minister, I'm asking you again: do you share that rational and reasonable conclusion that the \$9 million should not go into a birthday party and should go into operating grants for our Saskatchewan young people?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that I too do not want money spent on a birthday party, and that's why there is not going to be money spent on a birthday party; it's going to be spent for our children.

Then to answer the question about any reasonable, thinking person in terms of the view that they would take on a budget, well I want to put the case forward to the funding realities for Saskatoon public so that the thinking, reasoned person can have all the facts.

There are two major things that determine how we divide up this pie, Mr. Speaker. Point number one: the pie increased this year by 4 per cent, roughly, for the . . . probably run slightly ahead of inflation. There's a formula to divide that pie up. Now what would that formula divide it up on, Mr. Speaker? Well it would make sense that it be based on per student for the most part — spend the money per student. But because we want to be fair in this province, and some . . . For example, in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they don't have an opportunity to raise a lot of taxes from a local tax base because there isn't the accessible tax base that there is, for example, in downtown Saskatoon. We also have the formula reflect an ability to pay, to be fair, Mr. Speaker.

Now what the hon. member didn't mention when she talked about Saskatoon public is that it has seen its enrolments go down by 323 students. Now, Mr. Speaker, if you're making your payments based on per student and you have less students, wouldn't it make sense then that maybe they wouldn't get as much money, for example, compared to a board that saw its enrolments go up by 508, which is what Saskatoon, at St. Paul's, the enrolment has grown by, Mr. Speaker?

So let's put all the facts on the table. Is she really calling for a change in the formula? And I sense I may have hit a nerve, Mr. Speaker, because she must come clear and tell us if she wants a change in the formula.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order, order. The member from Regina Rosemont is sitting in his desk and hollering at the Chair. I do not appreciate that. If the member from Regina Rosemont has anything to say, he says it from his seat. Otherwise the courtesy of this House is not to holler

at the Chair.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — In response to the minister's response to my question, Mr. Minister, the reason why there are declining enrolments in this province is because people are fleeing Saskatchewan in droves. School boards still have schools to operate; they still have the utility increases; they still have all of the costs associated with education.

Now, Mr. Minister, new question. You will know that the University of Saskatchewan has stated it needs \$11 million in increased funding this year in order to maintain the *status quo*. Your budget only provides for a \$3 million increase for the two universities, plus a 10 million universities institutes enhancement fund.

Could you tell this House how that \$10 million pie will be divided up — what portion will be going to the University of Saskatchewan to help it deal with its enrolment quotas and underfunding; how much will be used by our institutes to replace the 600 instructors that you people fired, and the thousands of student spaces that you people eliminated; and what goes to upgrade the facilities at the University of Regina. Can you tell us how this \$10 million is going to be spent?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hepworth:** — In response to the member's first observation about that enrolments are declining because people, I think, to use her words — a typical overstatement from that member, Mr. Speaker — that the people are fleeing the province. Well in this case, in Saskatoon, the 323 pupils from Saskatoon public must have fled to St. Paul's because there the enrolment went up by 508. Now you can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. The reality is in some places the enrolments are going down; in some places they are going up. Generally speaking, we're at \$200,000.

The other point she raised about funding our universities and our institutes, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of this last budget. I'm proud of this last budget because it speaks directly to the importance that we attach to making sure that our young people have an opportunity to get a post-secondary education. And that's why we put that \$10 million fund in this budget, Mr. Speaker, and the people will be well served by it.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 15 — An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act

**Hon. Mr. Andrew:** — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Queen's Bench Act.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### 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.

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and an honour for me, as a member of the legislature from the city of Regina, to participate in the debate in another new provincial budget.

I want to begin by congratulating my colleague, the member for Qu'Appelle-Lumsden, for an excellent financial statement which will provide sound management of our provincial finances into the 1990s. This budget will help build and develop our high level of people services in health care, in education, in family programs, that all of us have grown up with and want to maintain and improve for our kids, and indeed for our children's children.

On behalf of the constituents, my constituents of Regina South, which I have the honour of representing in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Finance for his wise leadership of provincial finances to carry us forward into the trying years of the 1990s.

Under the leadership of this minister, our government has worked long and hard to provide for the efficient management of our province's financial resources in these past few difficult years. As a responsible government, we simply had to come to grips with the reality of declining provincial revenues. This resulted in sharp declines in world prices for our key resource and agricultural products, prices well beyond the control of the people of this province, and unpredictable as well, Mr. Speaker.

Who could have predicted back in the 1970s, even the former leader of the opposition indicated this, that back in the '70s, when Saskatchewan's economy was thriving, that world prices for our key resource and agricultural products would suffer such a severe drop, and more particularly, all at the same time. That was totally unpredictable.

And added to these problems, what hit us last year but the worst drought since the 1930s. Mr. Speaker, it was a time for difficult, tough but fair decisions, just like any business or industry or organizations or family, for that matter. Governments have to bring expenditures in line with revenues. As business men and women, as family managers, as citizens, we all realize that you cannot spend more than you take in.

Everybody, of course, realizes this except the member from Regina North, who laughs in his chair. It seems that not only he, but several others in the NDP opposition don't realize that as well, Mr. Speaker, and it's most unfortunate. You know with . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member from Regina North still keeps giggling at this. One day he will understand that you can't spend more money than you take in, son. I mean, it's simple,

you can't do that. So don't laugh about it. There's nothing to laugh about. It's a serious proposition. And they shouldn't elect a joke like you to serve in this Assembly if you think it's humorous. So, Mr. Speaker, you know, with their total lack of business sense, they would have us add substantially to the cost of government.

I mean, you know, they seem . . . I suppose they think that government is some strange, independent third party that has a money tree. Well, you'll never be in the position of government to find out again that it isn't some strange, independent third party organization with a money tree.

Government, Mr. Speaker, is us, all of us, all of us in this Assembly, all of the people watching this debate this afternoon, that we're taxpayers, we're consumers. The people, the gentlemen in the gallery, you're part of government; you both pay taxes and assume certain costs, and that's how this all functions. But the NDP seem to think that, no, they can do this and that and add to the cost of government and everything comes out in the wash. Well that's not so. You have to act responsibly. We have to maintain a high level of government service even during times of declining revenues. That's difficult.

The NDP have attempted, Mr. Speaker, at every opportunity to stir up many segments of our society with horror tales of reduced services. They've organized letter writing campaigns, protest marches, along with all other types of fear mongering. Wherever there's been a rally or a picket line or a protest of any sort, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that you can be sure that the NDP has undoubtedly had a hand in it. And you can be sure that the Leader of the Opposition will have one of his back-benchers there, wherever, to speak or to lead the protests as he hides back in the wilderness somehow and freely admits . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the member from Moose Jaw . . . there he goes spouting off. Maybe he's one of the ones.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition freely admitted in public that there was disunity in his caucus. Well when the leader says that publicly, the leader of a party publicly indicates that he has disunity in his caucus, it's not something to be proud of and speak about in public. I think, rather, he should take his caucus aside and, you know, have a few words with them to show that maybe they can get some unity, maybe they can think together, maybe they can behave in this Assembly, but it's apparent day after day after day that they either don't care — they have no respect for this Assembly, for the chair, Mr. Speaker, as was shown again today and you had to point out . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order, order, order. I don't think we . . . I would just like to ask the hon. member to refrain from that topic — I think it's been settled — and continue with his other remarks.

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — Well, I'm getting to a point, Mr. Speaker, that since he has assumed the duties of the Leader of the Opposition, the NDP have been using the sick, the elderly, the less fortunate in our society in order to exploit their own political purposes. In the Assiniboia-Gravelbourg by-election last December they used the politics of fear by telling the people that our

government was going to close all hospitals in that constituency. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because it relates to the budget. The budget doesn't indicate that that indeed is occurring.

What shameful behaviour by the Leader of the Opposition and by the opposition members that went along with that to take that kind of a stance. The voters of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg were not taken in by that kind of fear mongering shown by the Leader of the Opposition, and it's no wonder that the NDP opposition is quickly losing any credibility that they may have had with the people of this province. No wonder there's so much second-guessing going on within the NDP party itself about their strategies, about their tactics.

I recently read in one of their own publications:

People, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, have no reason to vote for the NDP. (I mean that's written in their own publication by one of their own.) All we do is talk about how we will restore this, or defend that, or fight to maintain something else.

Article goes on:

If this is all that the people in Saskatchewan wanted, then they wouldn't have voted against us in 1982.

I mean, these are all written by their own folks in their own publications, and it's no wonder. They have no policies, they have no programs, they have nothing left over there.

They are a political party in total disarray — only scare tactics, only protest marches — and I should add to those NDP statements, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan not only didn't vote for them in 1982, they didn't vote for them in 1986. I seriously doubt that when the time comes in the '90 or '91 election that I doubt they will vote for them then either. So it's no wonder that the current Leader of the Opposition is looking at the vacant leadership of their national party.

No one apparently wants the job there either. It's particularly, I think, a union-leader-dominated party federally. And I suppose that would be some type of an escape for the opposition leader, a chance for him to get out of Saskatchewan and maybe save face, but . . . particularly, you know, if his caucus goes on the way they do. But none the less I can tell him this, their current fear mongering, their current scare tactics are not going over with the people of Saskatchewan. He knows it, and members of his party know it as well.

In these difficult economic times of the past few years, the Minister of Finance has given us sound financial management to strengthen the fiscal position of our province. Good progress has been made in controlling the provincial debt, while at the same time providing increased support to health care, for education, for families, and for our staple industry of agriculture.

And the member from Saskatoon Centre, I hope that

when she enters this debate, rather than from her chair but on the floor, has something meaningful to say. So far, you know, everything that's come from that end of it, from her chair, hasn't made much sense. I will touch on that later in my remarks, where she is confused about the housing programs in this province.

She sits there as the critic for housing and doesn't even understand the program. I have some papers that I will probably send her way and ask her to read, so that if she's going to be the critic of housing for the seniors, she'll understand what those programs are all about. She can't say one thing in this Assembly and then take out an ad in the local paper in Saskatoon saying something totally different and congratulating people for it. I mean, you can't be hypocritical and get away with it.

The actions that this government took, Mr. Speaker, to protect the Saskatchewan institutions so dear to all of us, indeed to protect the well-being of all of us, are earning us the respect of all of the people in Saskatchewan. In the budget now before us, we will continue to protect and enhance the essential programs of health care, education, family, family farm. We will also continue the process to develop, to diversify our economy, to protect our homes against the threat of high interest, to provide more jobs for our citizens, more business opportunities. That entire range of protection, Mr. Speaker, is in this budget. And we will accomplish all of this at the same time while we are reducing the deficit for the third consecutive year.

(1445)

Health care for the people of Saskatchewan remains our number one priority, as it has been since the government of our current Premier came into office. This year, funding will be increased by over \$130 million for health care, and that's an increase of 11 per cent over last year.

And I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, as I travel throughout my constituency of Regina South, to point that out to all of my constituents, all of my voters, that we are indeed spending more money than ever before in the history of this province on health care. Total expenditures probably will amount to nearly \$1.4 billion, the largest expenditure on health, as I mentioned, in our history, and obviously much more support for health care than the NDP ever gave, despite all the noise that they may be making about it.

That amounts, Mr. Speaker, to almost \$1,400 for every person — every man, woman, and child that lives in our province. No wonder our health care system continues to be the envy of most parts of the world.

The NDP continues their old party refrain about cut-backs in health. The people of Saskatchewan hardly regard an increase of \$130 million in health support expenditures as a cut-back. I mean, how can they. A hundred and thirty million dollars in an increase is more than perhaps a dozen total department budgets in government, Mr. Speaker. It's a massive increase — an 11 per cent increase. And there is no person that will argue in any meaningful way that that indeed represents a cut-back. It's impossible.

But as usual, the NDP is out of step with the people of Saskatchewan. They seem to be out of step with them most of the time and continue on in that same trend.

For education, an increase of \$52 million in our current budget, bringing expenditures in education this year to a total of \$841 million, an increase, as I mentioned, of \$52 million.

Mr. Speaker, these very substantial increases in the essential programs of health care and education are being achieved, as I mentioned earlier, while we are still further reducing and attacking the deficit. For the third consecutive year, as I mentioned, we have attacked the deficit, and this year we will reduce it to \$226 million. It represents a drop of \$102 million or 31 per cent from last year's deficit.

And I think, under the circumstances, it's very good news that has been issued by our Minister of Finance. We are very, very pleased, as is the business community and the chamber of commerce, with the good progress that we are making in reducing the annual deficit. And while clearly we would like to be at a balanced budget as quickly as possible, everyone recognizes that we have to do the best we can under very difficult circumstances and get the fine balance of providing services in various programs and providing what the people need for protection, and at the same time address that deficit.

We outlined a plan a few years ago on how we were going to manage our deficit and get it under control, and we are well on target and on track to get there. And I believe that the thinking people of this province are pleased that we are in a position to say that we are on track and that we will get there.

All this goes on while at the same time we provide the increased care for health care and education and programs . . . additional programs for supporting our families and the family farm. And with a good crop this summer and continued sound management of the province's finance by the government, we hope to be able to forecast that balanced budget, or very close to it, within the next year or two.

And that, Mr. Speaker, will be an accomplishment that all of the people in this province can take pride in. It will make us the envy of many provinces across Canada, provinces left with deficits much, much larger than ours. The NDP government in Manitoba that were defeated by the Tories a couple of years ago — massive accumulated deficit that they left for the incoming Conservative government — just a massive debt load for all of the people in Manitoba. A tremendous struggle, and that's why I believe that when we as if . . . if or when we reach our balanced budget and how we are managing our deficit now will truly be a credit to all of the people of this province.

As the Minister of Urban Affairs, I'm pleased to say that it's a tremendous budget for municipalities throughout our entire province. The budget provides \$30 million — \$30 million new dollars for new programs for our municipalities. No wonder I don't get any questions in question period. There's not much that they can ask. And

I will take some time to review some of these new initiatives, Mr. Speaker, and what their impact will be on communities throughout the province.

I look forward to my SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) regional conferences this spring which, rather than being attended by my critic in the past, was attended by the Leader of the Opposition. I would suspect, Mr. Speaker, that these spring conferences will see a return by the opposition sending their critic rather than the Leader of the Opposition because there's not much for them to complain about to the municipalities. And the municipalities are very pleased with how our government has dealt with their problems over the last few years.

And it's fair to say that over the last few years SUMA, understanding the position of our government, have not been critical with the government but rather have worked with this government as we have attacked our problems throughout the province. It's fair to say that because of the nearness of my seat in Regina and the Regina city council that yes, every now and then I seem to get into a little bit of a foofraw with that council, and I don't want to. But it's interesting that while I can have an argument with my local city council, it doesn't spread beyond Regina, Mr. Speaker. It seems that the other 511 communities of our province are satisfied with this government. It's unique how it appears that only the city of Regina attacks us, but . . .

In late January I attended again the annual convention of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, as I do every year. And it's a great opportunity for me to meet with municipal officials to discuss with them their concerns, their problems, and perhaps more importantly to get their feedback and input into our programs. Mr. Speaker, our government is widely known throughout the province as always consulting with the people on various matters, and it's most unusual if we just simply barge ahead and install something new without discussions and consultations with the various interest groups.

And I'm really pleased that this is how our government functions and does indeed consult, because it's through these consultative processes that programs are designed that are very, very effective. They are effective from the point of view of cost because there is very little dollar waste, and they are effective from the point of service and delivery because they attack the problem head-on, because they are indeed designed by the people that will be using those programs.

So our government has always been guided by a belief in a consultative approach on developing legislation and programs. And it's an approach that my department and I, for example, have followed in a lot of instances — the recent legislation on dog control and the business assistance tax program. And they'll probably start laughing over there again about dog control. They seem to laugh about it every time I mention it, and it's really unfortunate. But that dog control legislation was brought about as consultation between our government and SUMA, and there was nothing funny about it. It was a serious piece of legislation, but the NDP seemed to think that it was kind of humorous.



The business tax assistance program that we were trying to come up . . . I'd always told SUMA that if the government could be a part of the solution . . . it was indeed a local problem, but if the government could be a part of the solution, we would like to be. And we were trying to be a part of this solution within a year on a problem that has existed for maybe 40 years, but certainly has expanded or compressed itself into a major problem with the business community in the last year or two. And in consultation with various interest groups, chambers, independent Canadian small business, SUMA — by consulting with those people we came up with the business tax assistance program that indeed will meet their needs and will satisfy the business community of this province.

A year ago, Mr. Speaker, if you recall, headlines continually in the media about business tax problems, about the business community rebelling in various municipalities throughout the province, on and on and on. Now? No. Seems that that particular issue has faded and faded dramatically.

Now having said that, we all recognize that this business tax assistance program is only a bridge. It's only a three-year program, but it does indeed, Mr. Speaker, give us three years. I say us — government, the local governments, and the business community — three years in which to permanently address the business tax problem.

I can tell you that from my discussions with officials from SUMA and from municipalities throughout this province, that this part of our budget is responding to the needs of our municipalities, and that certainly the budget overall has responded to the needs of the municipalities.

Yes, there are some parts of the budget that understandably they will have some comments and observations on, and dislikes — that's normal. That's not unusual. You can't satisfy everybody about everything all of the time, and they know that.

But by and large, they are extremely satisfied with the budget. They see it as being very fair. They recognize the emphasis that our government has put on health and education and protecting people. And they can see that with the additional help that we have now given the municipalities, we are carrying that even again forward, protecting people, because indeed we are protecting the taxpayer at the local level by providing more badly needed dollars in the budget.

As I mentioned earlier, I attended the annual SUMA convention recently, and there were several resolutions passed at that convention that called for renewed capital funding. Well we're all pleased to see that this budget responds to those resolutions with funding for a new six-year, \$100 million program — six years, Mr. Speaker, \$100 million — a program providing capital assistance to urban and rural municipalities. First time ever that any government in the history of this province has provided capital funding to rural municipalities, and in this fiscal year we have budgeted almost \$17 million.

I will soon be in contact with the executive of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association in each of the cities, the 12 cities, to talk about how they would like these funds distributed over the next six years and how they would like to indeed see these funds being used. Again, a very important part of the consultative process. They are the recipients of those dollars. How will they be shared? How will they be spent? And consultation always works far, far better than confrontation, Mr. Speaker, and we will develop programs that will be successful and pleasing to everybody.

I am confident that the program will go a long, long way in assisting our municipalities in repairing and replacing the deteriorating infrastructure in our communities, and thereby ensuring that future generations have the infrastructure to provide the capacity to take full advantage of the economic development opportunities and challenges ahead. Economic development and diversification, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely vital to our province, absolutely vital to our rural communities, absolutely vital to northern Saskatchewan. And as a result, we have to look at economic development opportunities that could be enhanced with the proper spending of these capital dollars relating to infrastructure renewal, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(1500)

I note as well that additional capital funding for recreational and cultural products will also be provided through another line in the budget through Saskatchewan Parks, Recreation and Culture, and it will be funded by lottery revenues. An additional \$33 million — additional \$33 million — will be provided over the next six years through that department. And I note that this initiative also responds to resolutions from the SUMA convention calling for assistance for deteriorating rinks and arenas. Funds from this program will go a long way to repairing and replacing the deteriorating rinks and arenas in many communities, which has been a real problem recently in many of our communities where the local rink is a gathering place in the winter-time.

And I know that the Saskatchewan Water Corporation will have an additional \$2 million for sewage lagoons to our rural communities.

And by the time that we look at various capital projects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, throughout the province that are contained within the budget and will be contained in future budgets, as we negotiate agreements with our cities throughout the province and other projects are announced as time goes by, that probably the truth of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this budget will be leaning towards \$200 million in capital financing over the next six years, although the line \_by-line at this point in time only refers to about \$135 million.

In addition to the capital program that I just mentioned for recreational facilities, I also note that the Saskatchewan Power Corporation has announced that it will be reducing its electrical rates for community-owned rinks and urban and rural municipalities by 50 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The power rates will be cut in half and thereby meeting another long-standing concern of SUMA

and our small urban communities in the country.

Many of our members who come from a small community know that the local rink or arena is the life-blood of their community. But operating costs and primarily the high electrical cost can cause a hardship for many of these smaller communities. And I don't need to tell you that a cut of 50 per cent in electrical rates will be quite a boost for those small rural communities, and it will ensure the continuation of those badly needed facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another program of major significance to our urban municipalities is the municipal revenue-sharing program which provides 15 per cent of the operating revenues for our municipalities, and this year I'm pleased that the revenue-sharing pool will amount to \$67 million. And while some may argue that the pool was not increased, I say to them, look at all of the other new initiatives that have been undertaken by this government.

The urban municipalities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have done a terrific job in addressing their local budgets, and as our revenues have dropped, we have not dropped our revenue sharing but, rather, contained it. And the municipalities recognize that.

So they did what we did, and they're having a look at their expenditure side, and they are managing their expenses very, very well. We have not seen significant property tax increases, nor should we expect to see that, as the elected officials in our local municipalities go about doing their task of containing their expenditures and living within their means. And for that they should be congratulated, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And now with the welcome addition of capital funding, it removes the pressure of the revenue-sharing side from them, and they can go about the task of setting their budgets without too much interruption of any service, or without any major tax increases.

One hundred million dollar capital grant program for urban and rural municipalities, over 32 million in new grants for recreational and cultural facilities for municipal governments. A new \$10 million business tax assistance program to help municipalities resolve the business tax issue — all of that representing \$30 million in new additional moneys in the Department of Urban Affairs.

A 20 per cent increase in funding for urban transportation projects by the Department of Highways. A new initiative to support needed sewer and water projects to preserve and protect our environment. All of these, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

However, we will continue to meet the wishes of SUMA as it relates to the revenue-sharing pool. We will continue to meet the wishes of SUMA for the distribution of that pool by maintaining a safety net for communities so that no community receives less than 5 per cent below last year's grant. So that although, as I mentioned earlier, we did not increase the size of the pool, we have, by virtue of consultation with SUMA, put in a 5 per cent safety net so that those communities that are experiencing declines in their population will not suffer a loss of more than 5 per

cent in their revenue-sharing grant.

I'm pleased to say that I have already notified the mayors and councils of all communities, all communities, informing them of the level of their grant for this fiscal year so that they can indeed finalize their municipal budgets.

Mr. Speaker, on occasion, along with all of the dollars and capital dollars that I've just talked about, on occasion our government is asked to provide financial assistance for special-purpose urban capital projects, such as the Regina-Moose Jaw carbon filtration plant. I'll mention that one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because a lot of the people in my community, in my constituency, are familiar with that. The Lloydminster sewage treatment plant is another one. In Saskatoon we've had Saskatchewan Place. Those special purpose funding.

This year, this fiscal year we'll provide funding for the implementation of the beginning of the Regina rail relocation project. And it will represent the first year of the province's \$25 million commitment to that project so that the people of Regina would have to understand that our government has a commitment now of \$25 million for the Regina rail relocation program — significant capital dollars that sometimes the people of Regina overlook that the provincial government is indeed contributing to the city of Regina coffers — \$25 million.

Now when complete, the project will provide Regina with numerous opportunities for economic and commercial redevelopment in various areas. And if the city ever gets to phase 2, the downtown core, well then it would even be more significant.

One other thing in our budget that might go unnoticed in the urban affairs side of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is something that I would talk about for a moment, the rat eradication program that people in urban centres might just have a little difficulty understanding. But one of the primary roles of any government is the protection of society. And last year we demonstrated our commitment to protecting our residents when we passed legislation to control dangerous dogs. This year, as part of a six-year program, our government will allocate \$1.6 million to implement a thorough and complete program to rid our province of a real menace — rats.

It is estimated that rats cause at least \$30 million damage each year — each year \$30 million damage through the loss of foodstuff and damage to buildings. More importantly, more importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rats present a greater threat to society through the transmission of disease to livestock and humans. Our goal is to make Saskatchewan a rat-free province within the next decade.

Now I mention that in context with our dangerous dog legislation, and I say that for a reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The reason is, the NDP thought that the dangerous dog legislation was pretty comical and they laughed at it. I hope for the sake of this province that the NDP opposite will not see the rat eradication program in the same light. It is indeed a serious problem that our government is prepared to do something about, and I

believe the people of this province will really appreciate when the program is complete.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year we have transferred a couple of programs from our Urban Affairs budget to other departments to improve implementation as well as program delivery. The transit for the disabled program that has been in our department for a few years now has been transferred to Saskatchewan Human Resources, Labour and Employment in order to build closer links with other programs targeted for disabled people that is in their budget already. So it will be kind of a central clearing-house for all of the disabled programs. The communities that have been involved in that program with us in the past appreciate the fact that I have already indicated to them that their budget dollars will be the same and simply be delivered through another program.

One other change, Mr. Deputy Speaker, funding for urban parks. Wascana Centre in Regina, Meewasin Valley Authority in Saskatoon, Wakamow in Moose Jaw, and Chinook Parkway in Swift Current are being transferred to Saskatchewan Parks, Recreation and Culture to bring about again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a closer co-ordination in park planning and development throughout the province.

That department, as we all know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is doing a magnificent job on our provincial parks. Urban parks are very important to our government, and with the expertise in that department I think it only stands to reason that an amalgamation of that sort is very positive. And I'm confident that these program changes will result in improved service as well as program delivery in those areas.

You know, it's amazing. I'm talking here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about a couple of changes in our budget, one being in the area of urban parks, and the other one, transit for the disabled.

The member from Regina Rosemont, from his chair, cried something about the ward system. Now if you have ever lived in the past, if you have ever had your head in the sand, if you could ever start walking backwards into the future, I'm . . . you guys take the cake. Talking the ward system. Well I'm not even close to . . . and the ward system is a part of . . . Get with it. Do you think the people in Regina Rosemont are concerned at this time with the ward system? There isn't even another municipal election for a couple of years, so get with it. You're so out of step with the people of your constituency and of this province, you don't have the foggiest idea what's going on out there.

Good lord, you know, all he can do is speak from his chair about the ward system. Even the media is giggling about that. They haven't written about the ward system for the last seven or eight months. I mean, it's a part of history now.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned a little bit earlier about business tax and about how our government wanted to be a part of the solution if we could. It was a problem that the urban municipalities had at the local level, but I'll just go into it a little bit more detail because this budget continues our

government's program of helping to stimulate business and industry, something that the NDP members opposite know very, very little of. But we like to believe, and we know, after discussions and consultations with our friends in the business community, that we on this side of the House certainly do know how to assist our businesses stimulate business. We know how to assist our business community and stimulate their side of their commercial activity.

(1515)

One way, of course, is the business tax. And by stimulating that particular sector of our economy, it encourages growth and expansion, and indeed it provides more jobs and diversification and more business opportunities for the citizens of this province. It's kind of a snowballing effect and things just keep rolling along.

But with their typical anti-business attitude, the NDP simply cannot understand the support and the encouragement that our government gives to small business in this province. It will be interesting one day . . . As I looked at the orders of the day in the blues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that one day we will be having a debate. There is a resolution put forward by the NDP concerning small business and diversification of our economy and the like. And I am looking forward to that debate because I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I will stand in my place on that day as well and talk nothing but business to them for a couple of hours or more to try to give them a lesson. I've been doing that for five or six years now — they still don't understand what it's all about — but with their typical anti-business attitude, the NDP simply cannot understand the support and the encouragement that our government gives and will continue to give small business in this province. Small business is indeed the engine that drives the economy of this province, and we will continue to grease the wheels of that small engine.

The NDP still don't realize after seven years in opposition that it is the small business and industries here that drive the economy in this province, that we have to diversify. No longer can we just sit down and get after one sector, the agricultural sector; we have to diversify.

It's business and industry . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Lining the pockets of the Tories . . .

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — Now the member from Regina Elphinstone comes in. Now here he is; here's a member that moves in from — a parachute candidate — and moves into Regina Elphinstone, purports to know everything about agriculture, and now he comes in here and he knows everything about business. Well we'll find out, we'll find out if the member from Regina Elphinstone indeed does. And when your resolution comes up, I'd like you to speak first and I'll make a few notes and then we'll compare after it's all over. And rather than speaking from your chair as you always do, get up and speak on it.

It's business and it's industry that provides the jobs and employment. And the only way the NDP knows how to create jobs is to add people to the provincial government

payroll and to appoint all of their friends and to appoint all of their relatives to various positions throughout government. Every now and then they accuse of us of doing that thing, but if we ever started comparing the lists, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be overwhelming to see the appointments that go on over there, because that's the only way that they believe the economy can go along, and that's the size of government, adding people to the provincial government payroll.

And it was those thousands of jobs that they added to the public payroll and their family of Crown corporations and in government departments and agencies that helped to create the deficit that we're now working hard to reduce. When we took over this government in 1982, the size of government was overwhelming because that's all they knew — big government.

Mr. Speaker, our government is solidly behind business. We represent the business community of this province. We know it's business that creates wealth in our society. We know that it's the private sector that creates the jobs and opportunities, not government. This government works to assist small business and industry in every way that we possibly can. We don't stifle. We don't strangle them with bureaucratic regulations the way the NDP did.

Mr. Speaker, in this . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Like Sunday shopping.

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — Like Sunday shopping. You want to debate Sunday shopping with me? The member from Prince Albert — now it's interesting to note that it comes from you, because you know that your city council is withdrawing the by-law, and they will let the business community regulate shopping hours in Prince Albert. Now where have you been while they made that announcement? Now he's not talking from his chair; he's pretty quiet.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be visiting that community and I will be speaking to the retailers of that community, because I don't have a problem at all in consulting and discussing with the sector that I came from — the retailing industry. I have no trouble with discussing with them the pros and the cons of Sunday shopping. They don't have to open on Sundays if they don't want to. People don't have to shop on Sundays if they don't want to.

The people that argue Sunday shopping on the basis of religious freedoms, the fact that they can't go to church, are hiding behind something that isn't there. Statistics indicate that only 15 per cent of our population attends church regularly. So you can't say then . . . you can't use it as an excuse. You can't have it both ways. You can't have the chairman of the Coalition Against Sunday Shopping breaking his own regulations. You can't have that.

You can't have major, large department chains that prey continually on rural communities saying that opening on Sundays is going to destroy the fabric of rural retailing when it's those very large enterprises that are attacking it with catalogue shopping centres paying very small portions of business tax, hiding behind that skirt. Mr.

Deputy Speaker, I've gone around this province a long time speaking about Sunday shopping. Why do you have to regulate people's lives? The market-place will regulate itself if you allow it to and if you stay out of interfering with their life.

This budget's \$1.1 billion construction program for provincial hospitals, for schools, for highways and road construction, for other capital projects, will be a tremendous boom, an asset to our small business and industry segment of our economy. Imagine, \$1.1 billion going to our businesses and industries in this province. Do you recognize at all what that will do for them? We estimate that that program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will support more than 9,500 jobs.

Also included in the budget is the \$10 million business tax assistance program that will assist municipalities with that battle and which will provide the business community with badly needed tax relief. For the past year the business tax has been a key issue with the business people, and I'm pleased that our government is now going to be a part of the solution.

In this session I will introduce the business tax assistance program that will be a three-year, \$30 million program. And reaction to that program has been extremely positive. And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP are going to vote against that. They will vote against that business tax assistance and all the while claim that they are friends, the new-found friends of the business community, and they will be voting against the business tax assistance program. But reaction to that program has been extremely positive from the business community, obviously, but also from the local government sector.

In developing the program I carried out extensive consultations with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, and it's as a result of their suggestions that we decided to make the provincial rebate program unconditional — not to have it tied to similar cuts on the municipal side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the program will have the effect of reducing business taxes about 25 per cent right across the province. And the rebate formula will provide relatively greater benefits to the very smallest of businesses so that for them, for indeed an awful lot of our small businesses throughout the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there will effectively be no business tax.

Our initiative on the business tax situation is only a part of the solution. As I mentioned, I don't look upon it as a permanent program; it's only a bridge. It's my hope that municipalities right across the province will look seriously at the level of business tax in their own communities with the aim of reducing or eliminating the tax.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my own city, Regina, my constituency, Regina South, where an awful lot of members of the business community live, here in Regina, unfortunately we have a severe business tax problem. And I hope that the city of Regina council can really do a job at looking at the high level of business tax. It seems that municipalities throughout the province are prepared

to look at their business tax and do something about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the mayor and most of the council in the city of Regina sit idly by and will not do anything for the business community in Regina.

And I plead with them, regardless of the political outlook that they may have, regardless of the political stripe that they may carry, I plead with them to show compassion for the business community of the city of Regina and do something about the high level of business tax in this city.

Even the NDP opposite claim to be their friends. Well then if they are — the business community friends — if they are, then don't vote against this part of the budget. Vote for this business tax. Don't vote against it. You will vote against it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

What a comment that was just made out of his seat. I won't even repeat that. I won't even repeat that. The member from Regina Elphinstone making a comment about one of the aldermen of the city of Regina by name. What a disgrace; you should be ashamed of yourself.

It is my hope that municipalities across our province, as I mentioned, will look seriously at the level of business tax in their communities with the aim of reducing or eliminating the tax. You know, it's only by reviewing their own revenues and spending priorities and by working with their own business community that a lasting solution to the business tax problem can be found, and some communities have already discovered that. Some municipal councils have already decided to provide their own rebates to businesses, and I hope that more will follow so that eventually the tax can be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to comment briefly in my remarks today on a couple of additional programs and activities from my Urban Affairs portfolio that I haven't spoken of, that are also included in some of the changes contemplated in our department. I think that we all agree that good budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting are corner-stones upon which sound government decisions can be made from all levels of government.

The public expects and deserves good financial management, and because of this The Urban Municipal Act set certain standards regarding municipal accounting and reporting practices. Over the past three years my department has reviewed these standards with a view to modernization and improvement, and this has involved extensive consultations with municipalities, with municipal auditors, and financial experts right across Canada.

The result of this work has been the recent introduction of a new accounting and financial reporting package for urban municipalities. We hope that this new package will accomplish the following objectives: greater consistency in municipal accounting policy and practices; more meaningful presentation of financial information to councils, the general public, and indeed to the provincial government; enhanced financial management at the community level; and finally, greater accountability.

As with any new approach or system, there are transition challenges and growing pains. We expect some of this,

and we are looking forward to working with municipalities on this very important venture.

Included in the budget this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to indicate a small increase and report to this Assembly that the Saskatchewan Municipal Board that became operational October 1, following legislation that was passed in the last session, will have an increase in its budget. The new board combines the jurisdictions and responsibility of the previous local government board, the planning appeals board, and the assessment appeals board. It combines all of this into one single board. The new board provides both local governments and members of the public with more effective service. It now has a broader base of expertise among its staff and board members on which to draw, and a greater flexibility to respond to increased work-loads.

(1530)

I'm pleased to tell this Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that amalgamation of these three agencies into one more effective body is proving to be a successful move. I'm confident that the new Saskatchewan Municipal Board will help our local government deal with the issues and challenges of the 1990s.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been almost six years since The Northern Municipalities Act was passed, establishing our northern municipalities and giving them the framework for local government and local decision making. And it was a milestone in the development of our northern communities because it put the responsibility for local decisions where it belongs, with the local community leaders. And I commend our northern community leaders for having taken up the challenges of local government.

And as I visit my friends in the North and the new leaders of the municipalities in the North, we have extremely interesting discussions. And it's interesting to note their change in attitude and how their concern for their communities and how their concern for good, effective government at their level is really starting to come about. They have seemed to be always satisfied with the budgetary decisions made by the provincial government. It appears that where at one time the northern communities were always so desperately seeking nothing but funding, their attitudes now are such that they are reasonably satisfied with the level of funding.

But they're searching for something else; they're searching for guidance; they're searching for encouragement as they deal with the problems in their local communities. And where originally, when I was first elected in 1982 and visited the northern communities, there was a little feeling of, maybe, uneasiness, or you quite didn't know what their attitude would be or our attitude would be as it related to some of these changes, now you go in with confidence and enjoyment as you sit around the table and discuss problems of mutual concern, knowing that in all probability these problems will be resolved and the leaders will return to their communities encouraged and feeling vibrant and showing the leadership skills that they have. And that is why they were elected to lead in their local communities.

And while I'm speaking about that, it's interesting to note that last year, for instance, when I announced the renewal of the capital funding for the northern communities, they were more than pleased, more than pleased that the government was able to continue that capital funding for them, while here in the southern part of the province the capital funding was still not in place.

And the northern communities recognized that they were getting that something special because of the reduced tax base that exists up there. But by the same token, the government recognized the need for capital funding for their communities to keep their small northern communities alive and vibrant. And this year the revenue-sharing pool, again through the formula with SUMA — and the northern representatives sit on the SUMA executive — the 5 per cent safety net applying to the northern communities equally as it does in the communities in the South, they recognize that. The revenue-sharing distribution, they have no problem with any of that. And it's really an encouraging thing to see, as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I travel with my friends in the northern communities.

But getting back to The Northern Municipalities Act, the legislation was first developed with the intention that northern municipalities would be extended the same powers and the same responsibilities that urban municipalities have under The Urban Municipalities Act. However, since The Northern Municipalities Act was brought in, a number of major amendments have been made to The Urban Municipalities Act, and most recently of course last year with amendments dealing with store hours and control of dangerous dogs. And as a result, The Northern Municipalities Act has become out of date, and northern municipalities no longer have the same powers as their southern counterparts.

And it's kind of interesting — again, and I refer to the dangerous dog legislation — the northern communities have problems in the North with dangerous dogs. The leaders do want to address the concerns that they have. The leaders recognize that they don't have the authority to deal with the dangerous dogs up there and want to. They don't believe that there's anything funny about the changes that we made to the urban Act the way the members of the NDP do. The northern communities are waiting for the same power so that they can indeed deal with their problems in the North. It is a not a laughing matter for them.

But in this session, I hope to bring forward a fairly lengthy Bill to bring The Northern Municipalities Act up to date and current . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well if you had something to say, you could get up here and stand and debate the budget. I don't know, you're getting up and walking around. I don't know if you're going to prepare your remarks or not. Let's see what you've got to say when it's your turn. If you can get up here and stand up and make some sense, you're more than welcome. I'll sit down.

In a few short years under our government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we here in Saskatchewan have become the leader in North America in providing quality social housing for those who need it most, for our senior

citizens, for low income families, for disabled people.

And I'm going to talk for a moment about the other side of my portfolio which is indeed housing. But our success has been achieved through the efforts, really volunteer efforts, of our local housing authorities right across our province, along with other non-profit, private and public housing organizations working in close co-operation with Sask Housing, and of course with our strong federal partner, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation — all of us serving in the finest Saskatchewan traditions, sharing our time, knowledge, and energy to help others.

What successes the corporation has accomplished, and it's owed mainly to the partnerships, as I mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have been made between all levels of government in our province — federal, provincial, municipal — and with the local housing authorities, all of those volunteers, and with the non-profit and private developers in Saskatchewan, we now have the amazing total of over 280 local housing authorities across our province providing services in public housing at the community level.

And our successes in social housing have been pretty significant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, including the accommodation we have developed for our senior citizens in enriched housing facilities across our province, in special care homes, and our housing programs for low-income families and for the disabled. And I'll mention in detail some of those programs in a moment or so.

The introduction of seniors' enriched housing has enabled seniors to remain in their own communities and maintain their independence while offering such added advantages as the companionship of other seniors living in the same complex, greater opportunities to participate in social and recreational events, and the focus for the delivery of home care services. To further support this concept, this budget contains a total of \$720,000 for the provision of enhanced services to seniors.

Now while our achievements in public housing in Saskatchewan have been outstanding, the challenges facing us in the future will be almost overwhelming. Consider the situation that we will be facing with respect to housing accommodation for simply our senior citizens.

Our elderly population is growing at such a rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that by the year 2000, 25 per cent of our total population will be considered seniors. Right now in Saskatchewan about 13 per cent of our adult population, about 132,000 people, are over 65 years of age. In these circumstances we must face the problem of supplying even more housing accommodation to meet the growing increase in the number of seniors.

As minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, I want to assure you that we are tackling the problem head on, that we are working now in partnership with the local housing authorities and other housing organizations, developing new ideas, new projects to provide not only more high standard housing for seniors but also for low income families and the disabled for now and for in the future.

Two years ago I had the pleasure of introducing a new housing program which will help resolve some of the major challenges ahead of us, and it's known as the innovative housing program. The program was set up to encourage communities, non-profit groups, private developers to organize, to develop housing projects in their local communities together with public sector assistance.

The innovative housing program gives communities across the province the opportunity to advise their provincial housing corporation what they need and what they require in terms of public housing and then put together proposals to develop these facilities with the financial assistance of Sask Housing.

As the minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have long felt that the most appropriate method for solving the housing needs of a particular community should come from that community. I spoke earlier on consultation and the consultative process, and here again in housing we find that it is critical, absolutely critical, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that consultation does occur. And it should come from that community because it's at the community level that local needs and resources and options available can indeed best be brought together.

For instance, facilities valued at over \$40 million, providing for a total of 547 housing units, were approved in the first year of the innovative housing program back in 1987. Of this total expenditure of \$40 million — the member from Regina Victoria should pay attention to this because in your very constituency, your very constituency, for your knowledge, contains many of these innovative housing projects.

And at the time that you were employed, under the former NDP administration you were employed at Sask Housing, you didn't have these kind of innovative programs. You delivered arbitrarily where you felt, when you felt, how you felt, and why you felt, without regard for the seniors or the public or anybody else.

We've changed all that. So don't you sit there and talk out of your seat without entering this debate, condemning programs that you know nothing about, that your constituency is enjoying and admires and respects. You should be ashamed of yourself.

But of this total expenditure of \$40 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I must have wounded him; he sounds mortally wounded, to quote my colleague. He's still spouting off and running at the mouth. Don't worry about an election, boys. When the time for that comes . . . I remember '82 was the same foofraw from the NDP. Boy, they were wiped right off the face of the map. So don't get too excited because when it's over for you and we're back here, you won't be getting a job with this government.

But a total of \$24 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is being supported by private sponsors and non-profit groups, and about \$16 million is supported by public agencies.

Last year 13 projects in 10 communities were approved,

and these projects will provide a total of 291 housing units for our seniors and for low-income families.

I feel that the innovative housing program will be the great way of the future for social housing in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And through this program many new projects will be generated to help us meet the challenges of fulfilling our housing requirements in the years ahead.

Our accomplishments in social housing over the years have been truly outstanding, but the challenges ahead to continue to maintain the high standard of public housing that we have developed will take our most dedicated efforts.

(1545)

It is desirable that as many services as possible for those who need assistance be delivered at the community level. Local people are most in touch with the housing needs in their communities and the opportunities available to meet those needs.

Our very successful local housing authority system, which provides the key community input into the management of public housing, has met all the challenges in the past, and working with the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, I know they will continue to do so in the future.

I want to express my appreciation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the many, many volunteers on the local housing authority boards and to those in other housing organizations across our province. They serve in the finest Saskatchewan traditions, and in so doing are helping to build better communities across our province, and indeed a stronger Saskatchewan.

Under innovative housing, the Government of Saskatchewan encourages non-profit organizations. I wish that my critic for housing would be here to pay some attention to these remarks, because I'm going to describe . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. Order. Members are not to make comments about members' presence or absence in the House.

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — I will describe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few of our newer programs. And I hope the members opposite pay attention so that they can recognize some of the significant changes that our government has put into the housing corporation.

Under innovative housing, the Government of Saskatchewan encourages non-profit organizations and members of the private sector to develop their own creative solutions to the local housing needs. No longer will anything be imposed on them. We're asking them to come up and to tell us innovative solutions. And upon project completion, sponsors will own and manage the facilities for the benefit of their community.

And any sponsor interested in providing housing assistance may request assistance under the innovative

housing program. Assistance is allocated following an annual province-wide competition. Innovative housing proposals are judged on how creative they are, how cost-effective they are, and how appropriate each solution is. Applications may be submitted for projects from anywhere in Saskatchewan. And to receive subsidies, projects must provide accommodation for low income seniors, for families, or for individuals in need of housing.

Applications for innovative housing are made in two stages, and in stage one, proposals are described in general, and terms are assessed by the corporation. In stage two, refined project plans, marketing strategies, and details of financial arrangements that demonstrate the viability of the project must be submitted in sufficient detail in order to receive a commitment from the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, and application forms are available from any office of the Sask Housing Corporation.

We have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we call life-interest leases that Saskatchewan Housing Corporation has become involved with through the innovative housing process. And a lot of people, particularly the members opposite, are not familiar with what life-interest leases are. Well I'll explain that.

Many innovative housing projects for senior citizens in Saskatchewan offer a tenant option that we call the life-interest lease. And this option applies to the non-subsidized units — the non-subsidized units — and permits higher income residents to join in on the benefits of our enriched projects.

And the lease is a means of prepaying for the accommodation while providing the senior with lifetime security. The life-interest lease is designed to guarantee exclusive possession and enjoyment of a unit for the senior's lifetime.

So therefore, if you've got a senior in a building with a life-interest lease, he can live with his friend that requires a subsidy, live together and enjoy the rest of their time. Leases may be held by an individual or a couple. And if a couple holds the lease, the surviving member is secure in keeping that accommodation.

An agreement between the sponsoring organization of the innovative housing project and the tenants clearly states the term of tenancy. And although terms may vary widely, responding to the needs of the community, some agreements require the sponsor or the building owner to repay the surviving tenant or their estate either the initial purchase price or the current market value of the tenant's accommodation. So it's really a fair, fair situation for our seniors.

Agreements require the tenant to pay a fair and appropriate share of the operating costs of the project on a monthly basis. And these costs include such expenses as light and heat and insurance and taxes and maintenance and repairs and management services — just the normal day-to-day operations.

And a life interest lease is similar to ownership, just as

though they owned their unit except that the tenant's investment in the housing unit is protected by the sponsoring organization while granting the tenant an interest in all of its real and personal property. The lease is always sold back to the sponsoring organization. It's not like a security or stock and bond that we're encouraging people to sell and promote and to make money on, but rather they sell it back to the sponsoring organization and they would resell the unit. The tenant may not realize a profit therefore on the sale, but would be offered upon vacating the lesser of either the original purchase price or the then current market value.

Several advantages to the tenant in using the life-interest lease option: it gives them lifetime security in the innovative housing project; continued lifetime security for the surviving spouse. It allows seniors with available capital and income to share in the benefits of services and facilities represented by the innovative housing project. They include common amenities and managed and co-ordinated programs and activities for a healthful life-style.

The economics of scale resulting from a project having non-subsidized units in combination with subsidized units means more seniors can enjoy an enriched and independent life-style. And this combined approach reduces the overall construction costs in comparison to building two separate projects. So there is a major advantage to everybody — to the sponsoring agency, to the community, and indeed to the seniors themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll describe enriched housing for the members opposite. For many Saskatchewan seniors the need for housing extends beyond simple shelter. The enriched housing concept provides housing for seniors that helps them to maintain their independence. The housing is enriched by the services available to residents. Services vary from community to community, based on the choices or needs of the seniors and local community, or the local commitment. Community organizations, volunteers, families of residents, and the residents themselves provide the enriched services.

Any Saskatchewan resident over the age of 60 may apply for enriched housing. Preference, of course, is given to seniors with lower incomes. Residents in enriched housing projects pay a monthly rent of not more than 25 per cent of their incomes. Income levels are reviewed to assure that, indeed, fair rents are assessed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In enriched housing projects, health care services are available on an assessed needs basis through the Saskatchewan home care program.

Enriched housing projects have been established in more than 200 communities throughout Saskatchewan to serve our seniors. While any Saskatchewan senior may apply to live in an enriched housing project, preference is given to seniors experiencing difficulty in living in their own homes and then as a result want to move out and have less work and be with their friends. And preference is also given to the lower income seniors, as I mentioned earlier.

And the enriched housing projects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are operated by the local housing authorities that I mentioned earlier in my remarks, and they are managed



by a board of volunteers right from their own community that serve on a volunteer basis. And so applications for the enriched housing should be made through the local housing authority in the local community where the senior would live.

We often hear the term, Mr. Deputy Speaker, public housing. What do we mean by public housing? Well, subsidized public housing projects are operated, maintained, and managed by the corporation at several locations throughout the province. Public housing units are available to senior citizens or to low income families, physically disabled people, as well as other individuals. Applications for public housing are determined by income levels of applicants, as well as the availability and appropriateness of housing locally. Public housing tenants pay monthly rent not greater than 25 per cent of their income, and income levels are indeed reviewed periodically to assure that fair rents are assessed.

At present, Mr. Deputy Speaker, public housing units are located in more than 280 communities across Saskatchewan. New units will be constructed in other communities where long-term demand can be demonstrated. And applications for individual units in public housing are again made through the local housing authorities. And again the appointed community volunteer board manages public housing on behalf the Sask Housing corporation.

In some communities though, non-profit organization also manage public housing, and the local housing authority personnel would assist anybody in contacting the non-profit organizations in those areas.

We hear a term as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rural housing. What is rural housing? Well, low and moderate income families living in communities with populations of less than 2,500 may apply for assistance to purchase or rent single-family housing units under this program. Housing under this program is allocated according to need.

Families and individuals of low and moderate income are eligible to apply for rural housing. Under this program 25-year mortgages are available at competitive interest rates. Down payments are only \$500. Monthly payments will not exceed 25 per cent of the household income. And during the life of the mortgage, income levels are reviewed to assure fair rents or mortgage payments are assessed.

Rural housing units are located across Saskatchewan in communities with populations of less than 2,500. To participate, applicants will be asked to provide satisfactory references, and purchasers will be required to provide satisfactory credit references.

So that's kind of a simple explanation of that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Again, the member from Regina Victoria, chiding from his seat. I'm glad at least that he's paying attention. He might be familiar with one or two of these programs. He's not familiar with the new ones because he doesn't work there any more, but his colleagues certainly aren't familiar with a lot of these programs.

I will speak, before I close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the home improvement program which the NDP have been very silent on as well over the last couple of years, because they know now that the home improvement program is perhaps one of the most popular programs ever introduced by any government in the history of the province.

And I would like to comment briefly on a rather important announcement that I had the pleasure of making last month, and there I advised the public at that time that more than \$1 billion in home improvement activity has been generated to date by the home improvement program. And that's the total value of home improvements made since the introduction of this very popular program in September of 1986. And it was an announcement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was conveniently ignored by members of the other side of the House. I guess it was just too much for them to handle.

(1600)

As I mentioned, few programs ever introduced in our province have had the public appeal and at the same time generated the tremendous amount of economic activity for business and industry, for labour, for labour — member from Regina Rosemont — few programs ever designed have created that much activity for labour as the home improvement program.

To the end of January of this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over 282,000 individual applications for matching grants have been processed under the program — almost 300,000. This meant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that approximately 60 per cent of eligible home owners in the province have utilized all, or a portion, of the grant.

The matching grant of \$1,500 has stimulated home owners to the extent that many individual products have exceeded \$3,000 in total costs, and as a result, approximately \$600 million on home improvements have been generated by the matching grants since the program was initiated. In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over 59,000 individual loans at 6 per cent interest have been made by lending institutions for home improvements valued at approximately \$400 million.

This program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has helped hundreds of thousands of Saskatchewan households preserve and enhance their most important investment, their home. It's no wonder the NDP doesn't contradict this program. It is one of the most successful job creation programs in the history of this province — estimated over 22,000 jobs will be created or maintained as a result of this program.

And one other thing, one other thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very successful in creating special employment opportunities for our students, not only in the summer-time but in the winter-time as well.

And this program . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'd like to get into a debate with my members opposite. I only wish that some days they would ask me questions during question period. This program is not a hand-out. This program is a partnership, a partnership between the

people and between this government. It's a partnership in which people make their own decisions, set their own priorities, work with the small businesses to get the job done and to create the jobs as they're doing it. It's a powerful force for job creation that has helped this province consistently maintain one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada.

This government is committed to encouraging economic development and job creation. And we also know that the home renovation industry is one of the most labour-intensive industries in North America. And the two members across are chiding now about this seat, and yet this is one of the most labour-intensive industries in North America.

Are you against jobs? Are you against the union people that work in these shops under the home renovation industry? You must be. Well we don't happen to be against any of that, and wherever we can help to maintain employment and create employment and create jobs, we will do that because we believe that's what the role of government is.

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

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — In my home city of Regina, the program has generated a total of \$192 million in home improvements to date. That's the total value of home improvement work carried out by 59,000 individual applications for matching grants, and 14,000 loans at 6 per cent made by the lending institution. That adds up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to 73,000 people in the city of Regina who have taken advantage of the program since September of 1986.

As you're aware, the home improvement program provides a matching grant of up to \$1,500 to home owners for renovations and other permanent improvements on their property. It provides for loans from financial institutions of up to \$10,000 at 6 per cent for 10 years.

Home owners of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are tremendously proud of their homes. It's probably the most important investment that they will ever make. And this program makes it possible for them to maintain and improve their homes and give them the pride of ownership that they truly want and truly deserve.

In addition, the home improvement program has become, as I mentioned, a tremendous stimulant for economic activity. Surveys now show that it's resulted in over 22,000 jobs for the people of our province since it's been introduced. It's helped to keep our unemployment rate among the lowest in the country, even during a time of stress in the economy resulting from our depressed agricultural sector created by that drought of last summer. Really it has become a year-round provincial employment program, creating jobs for the people of our province, especially in the winter months when work activity for various trades and supplies slows.

You know, traditionally governments are required to implement a winter works project or a job creation project of some kind at some cost to the budget over the

winter period. We have found, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that since the creation of the home improvement program, that particular expense to a government is not needed because the employment is there as a result of the program.

Besides the jobs, the program has helped to keep an awful lot of our small-business sector alive and well. Small business and industry have really appreciated the economic activity generated by the home program . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They really have. If you ever talk to any of them, you'd find that out.

The member from Regina Victoria obviously never talks to anybody in the home renovation period . . . or business, because he's surprised by that statement. I invite you to go and talk to some of these . . . Didn't you talk to these renovation people when you were employed by the Sask Housing Corporation before you were elected? When the other NDP administration had you hired, what did they do — just pay you to look out the window? Why didn't you meet with some of these people and find out what was going on? You go out and talk to them.

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

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage home owners who have not already done so to take full advantage of the home improvement program. As it's their style, members of the opposition very weakly tried to make some political hay by trying to find something to criticize about the program, but lately they've even been strangely quiet. I would assume that quite a few of the members opposite have indeed improved their homes as a result of this program.

I think that they have come to realize that they'd better show some respect for a program in which nearly 350,000 home owners have participated. They had better show some respect for a program that has helped produce some 22,000 jobs for the people of this province, providing very welcome economic activity for small business and for industry in our province. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to encourage home owners to take advantage of the program so that they can improve one of the most important investments that they will ever make. The continued economic activity for small business, for industry, generated by these home improvements will help provide more jobs for our citizens.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out of respect to the time, there is more that I could say, but I suppose the members opposite would want to get into this debate rather than speak continually from their seat as they do. So I will have more to say at some other time in another debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And at this time I suppose that it's not really necessary for me to tell all members of this Assembly that without question I will be supporting this budget at the time the question is asked. And I hope that the members opposite, recognizing the good that has been done for our province as a result of that budget, particularly if they are serious about helping the small-business community, will not vote against the business tax assistance program but

indeed they will support the budget as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. Lyons:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after witnessing the performance of the member from Regina South, I think to borrow a phrase from Churchill would be apt at this time: never has so little said so much about nothing.

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

**Mr. Lyons:** — And that's precisely the content, Mr. Speaker, of the remarks made by the member from Regina South.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, in beginning my address today I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Regina Rosemont, the constituency I presently represent, for the support that I've received from them in the positions that I've taken in this House over the last few years.

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

**Mr. Lyons:** — I think back, Mr. Speaker, to some of the issues which have arisen in the city of Regina in which the residents of Regina Rosemont have in their great numbers found themselves in support of the position I've taken in this House. Or to put it another way, and more modestly perhaps, that I've had the opportunity and the fortunateness — if such a word exists — to be on the same side as the issue of the people in this constituency.

And I can think no further, Mr. Speaker, recently, to the question of the municipal election which has occurred in Regina last fall in which we found ourselves, in Regina, supporting the concept of a ward system in Regina. Now we took a position prior to the municipal election in Regina, saying that we think that the people of Regina have the smarts and the capability and the intelligence and the initiative to be able to organize their own affairs in a way that they want to, Mr. Speaker, to be able to dictate what form of government they will have in that city. And they voted overwhelmingly, Mr. Speaker, overwhelmingly. Over 75 per cent of the voters in Regina and over 80 per cent of the people in the constituency of Regina Rosemont voted in favour of retaining the ward system.

Now why did they have to vote, Mr. Speaker? Why did they have to vote on that issue? You know, they had the ward system in Regina — a system that worked well, a system that provided the citizens of Regina one of the highest levels of municipal services in this country. But you know, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't good enough. That wasn't good enough for the member from Regina South, the Minister of Urban Affairs.

That same minister, who moments ago talked about who represents whom in the city of Regina, had the audacity, and still has the audacity today, to stand there and say to the people of the city of Regina that he knows best, that he knows best, that he knows what's better for the people of

Regina than the people of Regina themselves do. Over 75 per cent of the people of Regina rejected that minister's initiative in taking away their ward system.

**An Hon. Member:** — They call him the little dictator.

**Mr. Lyons:** — They call him the little dictator because he acts like a little dictator. Those were the kind of comments that I heard as I travelled throughout Regina Rosemont during the last municipal election, and that since then I've continued to hear as I could travel about the constituency visiting with people and talking to them about the performance of this government. And I'll go at great length, Mr. Speaker, into the nature of that performance.

But I want to remind the member of Regina South that they didn't elect him — not the constituents of Regina South, not the people of Regina, not the people of Regina Rosemont — they didn't elect him to be a little dictator, to impose on them a system of municipal government which they don't want. They didn't vote for this government to do that.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, they didn't vote for the candidate put up by the member from Regina South, organized by the Minister of Urban Affairs, the former MLA for Regina Rosemont, Mr. Gordon Dirks, the PC stalking horse in that municipal election. The people of Regina rejected that approach to government. And not only did they reject it, Mr. Speaker, they rejected it overwhelmingly. They dumped Dirks.

They took the opportunity to speak against the record of not only Mr. Dirks, but they took the opportunity to speak against the record of that Minister of Urban Affairs, the member from Regina South. They took that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to say to this government that they don't want to be dictated to by little dictators, that they don't want legislation crammed down their throats without consultation and against their wishes, in overwhelming numbers. They don't want the kind of government represented by that member from Regina South, the Minister of Urban Affairs. They took that opportunity to vote for increased services, for maintenance of good administration, for maintenance of fiscal responsibility, and they took that opportunity to kick the candidate for the PC Party out once again.

And that, Mr. Speaker, I think that says more, the actions of the people of Regina in that municipal election spoke more and says more about the performance of that minister, that member from Regina South, than any other thing that either he or any members on this side of the House could say. The people spoke. The people spoke, Mr. Speaker, and they spoke overwhelmingly. They gave a resounding no. The verdict of the people of Regina to the activities of that minister is a resounding no.

(1615)

That's why, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House are now raising the call for an election. Because we know, not only in Regina, Mr. Speaker, but throughout this province, the people want an election to speak on the performance of that government.

And they want to do that, Mr. Speaker, they want to do that before this wrecking crew that sits on the opposite side of the House goes and sells off the assets that the people of this province have worked long and hard to build. They don't want that government over there to sell off what belongs to them. They don't want that government over there to give to their big business buddies that which they have worked to create and worked to build in this province. And that's why they will want an election, and want an election very soon.

I intend to go into the question of giving away our natural resources, of selling them off to the outside foreign big business interests outside boundaries of our country a little further on, Mr. Speaker. But before that I'd like to make a few comments directed specifically to what some people have been telling me, people in Regina Rosemont and around the city of Regina, have been telling me about this budget.

Mr. Speaker, there is general agreement among my constituents and among the people of Regina, and I do suspect from the things I've been hearing and the phone calls that I've been getting and the people that I've been talking to around the province of Saskatchewan, that there is a developing consensus in this province that this budget is a corrupt budget, that this budget is a cruel budget, and that this budget is a cynical budget.

They call it the three C's. They call it the three C's, Mr. Speaker, although goodness knows, with the performance of the government, why they don't call it the seven C's, since we all have a sinking ship, and that's obvious to everybody in this province, in the government opposite. But they're calling it at least the three C's — corruption, cruelty, and a cynicism unsurpassed by any government in the history of this province.

Now I'll get into the cynicism of that government opposite in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, but I think first of all I'd like to talk a little bit about the cruelty in this budget, because this budget is a budget for the rich, by the rich. It characterized in its cruelty, the nature it mirrors, the nature of the government opposite. Because the government opposite, after all the glossy brochures and after all the expensive ads are stripped away, this government in its heart is a mean government, is a mean-spirited government, is a vindictive government, and it is a cruel government.

It's a cruel government because it attacks the people of this province through the budgetary process — and this last budget is just a perfect example of it — by increasing the tax load on the average person in this province, whether they're poor, whether they're working on the land, whether they're working in the city. They are attacking the people of this province through a tax load which hits directly at the working people and the poor of this province.

Taxes, taxes, taxes. More and more taxes, less and less services. And that kind of operation, that kind of administration by this government is its hallmark. It is in that point that we find the kind of cruelty, and it's an extended history of cruelty through taxation, carried out by this government since 1982.

For example, we've seen, for poor people, for poor people, a freezing of the Saskatchewan assistance plan. We've seen freezes to the family income plan, so that those people who are the working poor of this province have less and less and less disposable income, have to make do with less and less and less because of the kind of measures introduced in the consecutive budgets of this government.

You know, this is the government that introduced the flat tax, the famous flat tax . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — In the most brilliant budget.

**Mr. Lyons:** — . . . in the most brilliant budget by one of the most intelligent, so-called, self-proclaimed intelligent Finance ministers, the minister there, the member from Kindersley.

This was the government that introduced the flat tax. The flat tax, one of the most regressive of taxation instruments that one can find in the lexicon of the tax collectors in this country. A flat tax which hits more at the poor, more at the working poor, more at the working and more at the middle class than it does to those who have large disposable incomes and can afford to make their contribution, but who, because of tax accountants and tax lawyers and tax loopholes and this, that, and the other thing, are able to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

This flat tax, Mr. Speaker, comes from a government which promised to reduce taxation for the average person in this province, for the real people of this province. That government promised to reduce taxation, but what do we have? We have a litany of increased taxes.

Mr. Speaker, did they reduce taxes? No, no, they didn't reduce taxes. Did they promise to reduce taxes? Yes they did.

Now what taxes did that government promise to reduce? Did it promise to reduce the sales tax? Yes, it promised to reduce the sales tax. But did it reduce the sales tax? No, Mr. Speaker, that government did not reduce the sales tax despite its promise to do so. One promise broken.

Did it promise to reduce income taxes for average people in this Saskatchewan? Yes, it did, Mr. Speaker. How much did it promise to reduce income taxes by? Ten per cent, Mr. Speaker. It said to the people of Saskatchewan, we're going to reduce your taxes by 10 per cent.

You know, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House are still waiting for that 10 per cent cut in income tax, because we know the kind of hypocrisy and the kind of hypocritical statements which comes from that government when it comes to taxes. They say we'll get a 10 per cent cut in income tax, but what do they give us? They give us the flat tax. They give us a flat tax which hits poor and working people in Saskatchewan the hardest.

Now what did they say about the gasoline tax, Mr. Speaker? What did that government and all those members of the Progressive Conservative Party who ran throughout this province say about the gasoline tax? Did

they say they were going to take the gasoline tax off? Yes they did, Mr. Speaker. They said, we will eliminate the gasoline tax. And for how long did they say they were going to eliminate the gas tax, Mr. Speaker? They said, Mr. Speaker, for ever, or at least as long as there was a Progressive Conservative government in power in this province. Right?

Now, Mr. Speaker, what was the real history of this gas tax? Do we have a gas tax in this province today, Mr. Speaker? We sure do. We sure do. The member from Moose Jaw South is absolutely right. We sure do have a gas tax in this province. That's strange. That's the government that said they were going to eliminate the gas tax as long as there was a PC government in this province — until their dying days, Mr. Speaker, until their dying days.

Well I guess it's no accident, I guess it's no accident that we see a gas tax, and we see not just a gas tax but an increase in a gas tax, because these are the dying days of that Progressive Conservative government, Mr. Speaker. These are their dying days. The people of Saskatchewan are digging; you can hear the shovels hitting the earth; you can see the mounds of dirt being put up. Because each and every one of the members of that government office is being prepared for a decent political burial.

And let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan want to see those political corpses put in the ground so that we don't have to smell the stink and stench of decaying politicians very much longer in this province. We want to see them gone; we want to see them buried. The people of the province do as well, Mr. Speaker. The dying days of the Progressive Conservative government are upon Saskatchewan.

And it's unfortunate, it is unfortunate because I suspect that as poll after poll after poll comes in, I suspect that as they see the trend line staying bottomed out, I suspect as they hear from their high-priced pollsters that they're not going to find a method of coming back, that they will hang on until the last breath that lies in their political bodies, irregardless of the effects it has on the people of this province, irregardless of the effects it has of the economy on this province.

Regardless of the consequences, these people will hang on by their fingernails until the political rigor mortis has set in so hard that it will be hard to carry them into the political grave to which they're headed. And why? Because they've done things like put on taxes on gas, taxes and flat taxes and income taxes and sales taxes, when they said they were going to do the exact opposite.

And this budget, Mr. Speaker, carries on in that tradition of breaking the faith. That budget, that was presented by the Minister of Finance, carries on in that tradition.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I look at the *Leader-Post* in the first days following the budget, March 31, on the financial page, and it says, and I'll use the quote, "NDP says Lane baked a flop for his budget."

And I think that there's general agreement on that . . . there's general consensus around Saskatchewan,

because of the tax increases, because of the kind of misguided priorities of this government indicated in its fiscal statements, that it was a flop.

Well we know what kind of flop it is in this agricultural province of ours, Mr. Speaker, don't we? We know it's the kind of flop that affects families and affects farming families and working families. We know what kind of flop it is. It's the kind we step around, it's the kind we try to avoid, it's the kind that gets our boots dirty, and it's the kind which muddies up the farmyards of this province, and the kind of which the farming people of this province, too, will have learned to avoid.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a little bit more I'd like to say on the tax increases that are hitting all the people of this province. We have the amazing institution of the gambling tax, where the people of Saskatchewan are now going to be forced to, if one were to believe the Minister of Health — and that again is an open question and we'll deal with the question of credibility a little bit later — but if one believes the Minister of Health, we're going to put a tax on lotteries like the 6/49 and the Provincial, we're going to put a tax on the gaming commissions, we're going to put a tax in such a method that health care will be protected by gambling.

Now you know, I think that most of the people of this province find that notion abhorrent, Mr. Speaker, that they have to depend on gambling for quality health care. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's the kind of thing that used to be outlawed in this country. You know, it used to be illegal to buy Irish sweepstake tickets, and I'm sure all the older members of the government opposite remember that well. But the Irish sweepstakes were illegal in this country precisely because the abhorrent notion of using gambling to support health care is not accepted socially.

(1630)

There was a notion at one time in this province, Mr. Speaker, that health care was a collective responsibility. There was, prior to 1982, a notion that we all had to contribute our fair share to the health care system in order to develop the number one health care system in North America, the envy of North America, the kind of system that the American people themselves want instituted in their own country, the kind of thing that . . . the kind of health care system, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't leave 30 million American citizens without any kind of health care protection.

They look north to Saskatchewan, and I can think of American leaders like Bobby Kennedy, and I can think of American leaders like Ted Kennedy, who still does point to Saskatchewan, who still points to Saskatchewan and says, that's the kind of medical care system that they need in the United States, because it was based on the notion of collective responsibility, that we are all responsible for the health care of all our neighbours, of all our friends, of all our family, and of all residents in this country.

But no, that notion, Mr. Speaker, seems to have gone with the wind. It appears to have blown away with the dust that is now littering the fields of Minnesota and North Dakota. It appears to have disintegrated, at least in the minds of

the members of the government opposite.

Health care is a social responsibility. We have a clear-cut differentiation between that government's notion of health care and this side of the House notion of health care.

We say that health care is a collective responsibility; it is a social responsibility; it is a responsibility of all of us. Those members opposite say that health care is a responsibility of the gaming tables and the gamblers. They want to indulge in Las Vegas-style health care. They want to put health care at the same level as the Renos of the world. They want to tax gambling in order to bring the health care system — to try to bring the health care system back to where it was.

And you know, there's a certain abhorrence outside that notion that health care should be subject to gambling, that our health is something to gamble with. There's another aspect of this tax that I find abhorrent, Mr. Speaker, and that is that this tax is a regressive tax. It is a tax which affects poor people and working people the most. Those who have the millions of dollars don't worry about buying Lotto 6/49 tickets, but those who are in dire economic straits are those who see their real wages shrinking, as they have in the history of this government — buy lottery tickets hoping to hit the big one, hoping to find some financial stability and some financial independence for their own families.

And yes, it's a gamble; and yes, most of us who buy lottery tickets know it's a gamble — 13 million to one, to win the 6/49, or is it 13 billion to one? Some astronomical odds anyway, Mr. Speaker. Some astronomical odds.

And we all know that there are very few winners in that particular game. But to depend on providing money for our health care system based on Nevada and based on Las Vegas-style health care funding, I think, Mr. Speaker, meets with the disapproval of not only, of not only the majority of people in this province, because we've seen after all, the reaction of the member from nickelodeons . . . the member from Mayfair, Mr. Speaker, right, the member from Mayfair, right, who threw up the trial balloon that we were going to have electronic slot machines and electronic gambling, and who was laying the basis for that kind of electronic world where the poor pour their money in so that the government can tax, so that the government can tax those who participate in it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this was a member who said he was misspoken, despite the fact that his words are clear and his words are recorded by members of the press. We know, Mr. Speaker, through what that member said, what the plans of the government are, that the government plans to introduce gambling on a wide scale in this province, electronic gambling, in order to fund a health care system that these people have helped try to run into the ground.

That's not acceptable, Mr. Speaker, to the people of the province. And I wonder, as I stand here in my place and look at those people who sit on the other side, how acceptable is it to them. I wonder, I wonder, Mr. Speaker, how the member from Moosomin feels about funding the

health care system through gambling. Right? Now here is a member who has proclaimed time in, time out, about his moral and uprighteous view of the world, who has wrapped himself in the cloak of the kind of morality and a return-to-basics morality that those on the more conservative side of the political spectrum tend to wrap themselves in, and I've seen that member stand here and try to lecture us on this side of the House about questions of morality. And I'm wondering where that member stands when it comes to providing increased opportunities for gambling in this province.

And I also wonder, Mr. Speaker, how it is that the member from Rosthern, another one who cloaks himself in the deep purple robes of righteousness and morality, I wonder how he feels, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the question of his government and his cabinet introducing gambling on a wide scale throughout this province.

I wonder how he feels about that, Mr. Speaker, because, you know something, I tend to think that he may be feeling the heat and may be feeling the pressure from his social group and his bases in his constituency who, given their history and given their development and given their public statements, oppose that kind of venture by the government to have health care subject to the whims of gambling. I'm wondering how that member from Rosthern feels when members of his own congregation phone him to complain about the government's activities when it comes to gambling.

Or, Mr. Speaker, the member from Morse, another member who attends prayer breakfasts regularly, who tends to wrap himself in the cloak of righteous indignation, how does he feel? And what do his constituents feel about funding health care in this province through gambling? What kind of moral dilemma does that member find himself in, Mr. Speaker?

That's an interesting question and one that, hopefully, that member and the member from Rosthern and the member from Moosomin and perhaps, if we ever get a word out of the member from Biggar, or if we ever get a comment out of the Environment minister, who again is another one of those who wraps himself in that particular cloak of moral righteousness to try to . . . What is their opinion of gambling? What are they going to say about the government's attempt to introduce gambling for health care on a mass scale? And I wonder. I think it will be interesting, and the people of this province will be interested to hear their comments on that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there was one comment I wanted to make regarding taxation, and that is the question of the gas tax, because I find that as I go about since the introduction of the budget, that this is probably, more than any other item in the budget, is the thing which, I wouldn't say tickles the fancy of people, but has certainly got their attention. I think tickles the fancy would be not an apt expression. I think it's caught their attention.

You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because not only has the government promised, not only did this government promise to eliminate the gas tax, they now have one of the highest gas taxes of anywhere in Canada.

And though they have a rebate program which excludes about one-third of the people of this province from participating in, just because people don't like the kind of red tape and bureaucracy in keeping all the little receipts, and I wonder why that they don't use these plastic health cards to identify people. You know, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance over there, the minister keeps talking about, well, the NDP wants a gas pump for in town and a gas pump for out of town and a gas pump for this. I've got a suggestion for that minister.

Mr. Minister, why don't you use the health care card to identify Saskatchewan residents? That seems to be no problem, Mr. Speaker. That seems to be no problem. And if you're worried about commercial uses of in-province, then I think that the minister may take it upon himself to change some of the regulations to in fact allow small trucking concerns and school boards and municipalities, and all those who use fuel — all those who are burdened by this taxation — to allow them to use that great plastic health card so that they don't have to go through all this rigmarole of the rebate. A plain and easy — plain and easy — a plain and easy solution to the minister's problem, Mr. Speaker. Why not use the health card so that people get the rebate at the pumps, so that they're identified as Saskatchewan citizens, so that they don't have to pay the gas tax?

But you know why, Mr. Speaker, that minister won't introduce it? And I see the Deputy Premier over there is chuckling a little bit. You know and I know what he's chuckling about, because not only we have a solution to that particular problem, it's not, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . oh, the Deputy Premier now says he's agreeing with me. So we will expect, Mr. Deputy Premier, if I heard you right, that announcement to come forthwith that health care cards will be used to give people their gas tax rebates as they pay for the gas.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that's going to occur, because the reason that the rebate system is introduced, Mr. Speaker, was this. First of all, a third of the people don't get their money back because they don't apply for the system because they're tired of the red tape. But the second reason, Mr. Speaker, the second reason is this, is that the government gets to keep the money and the interest off the money collected in the gas tax rebate. Not only do they get to keep the gas tax itself, they get to keep the interest off the gas tax. And we're not whistling Dixie here, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the amount and the sums of money involved. We are dealing with millions of dollars in interest which the government keeps by using money which the people of the province of Saskatchewan in essence have loaned them.

I say, Mr. Speaker, I say that if this was done in the private sector, those people would be charged by the police for perpetrating a swindle on the people of this province. I say that if a scheme like that was cooked up anywhere else outside the cabinet rooms of this particular government, that it would be investigated for the kind of nefarious swindle which it is.

Think, Mr. Speaker, these people take your money, they earn the interest off us, they only give part of the money back, and they keep the interest. I'm saying, Mr. Speaker,

why don't you use the health care card so that people can get their rebate instantly, and why don't you give the people their interest back? Why don't you give, when it comes to the rebate, give those people who get their initial tax, why don't you pay the interest on top of it, Mr. Speaker? It seems to me that with all the modern, leading edge technology that this government likes to say that it's into, that they'd be able to figure out what the interest on your money would be.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that to the Minister of Finance, that those are a couple of easy ways he has in dealing with the question of the gas tax, since he doesn't seem to be able to come up with any solution by himself. And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the Minister of Finance would appreciate this kind of help, needs this kind of help, given his performance as Minister of Finance over the past few years in this province.

But that's enough about taxes, Mr. Speaker. I want to come to what I consider now the question of what this budget is really about, what this budget is really about, Mr. Speaker.

(1645)

We've seen the kind of cruelty it imposes on ordinary working people. We have seen what it does to working people in this province. You know, Mr. Speaker, that's not just political rhetoric. When I say that the actions of this government have impoverished the people of this province, that is not just a question of political rhetoric. If you look at the statistics, Mr. Speaker, of the wage levels of working people in this province since this government has come to power, you will see that it is not just political rhetoric.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, a brief, a newspaper called, "The Impoverishment of Saskatchewan Workers — Unemployment, Underemployment and Poverty." It's done by Mr. Gordon Ternowetsky, from the social administration research unit, Faculty of Social Work, Regina, Saskatchewan, February 26, 1988.

And what it does, Mr. Speaker, is outline the fall in wages, the fall in real wages of the working people in this province since 1981, and it does it both with urban incomes and with rural incomes. And what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, in this particular paper, this particular collection — the statistics, by the way, come from Statistics Canada — is the kind of fall in real wages experienced by the people of this province.

You take some people in the rural postal code area in 1981, the rural postal code area S0A, and the S0A rural postal code area covers the area of east-central Saskatchewan. That's represented by the member, for example, from Saltcoats, represented by the member from Yorkton, areas represented by the member from Melville. And that particular rural area, Mr. Speaker, based on 1981 dollars and the use of the dollars as constant dollars, which means that the dollar of today is worth 140 times more than the dollar of 1981, for this purposes, that based on these statistics of Statistics Canada up till 1986, we find people in east-central Saskatchewan, 1981, the average female employment

earning in that area was \$7,634.66 a year. That's pretty bad, Mr. Speaker. And that was 1981 — 7,634.66.

In eight years of this government, have the women workers of east-central Saskatchewan benefitted by the economic policies pursued by this PC government? Well according to this, they haven't. In 1984 . . . pardon me, in 1986, whereas the average woman worker in east-central Saskatchewan earns \$7,634, in 1986 it's now down to \$7,590.56. There's an actual decline in average earning of women workers in east-central Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I can go through east-central Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan and west-central and south-central and south-east and south-west, all through these area codes — and what do we find? The same type of statistic. Real wages in Saskatchewan for women workers were higher in 1981 than they are in 1986, thanks to the economic policy of this government.

But that should be no surprise, Mr. Speaker, because the economic policy of this government was outlined in a speech by the Premier of the province not very much long ago in Moose Jaw. Right in Moose Jaw, several weeks ago, the Premier of this province said, our economic policy is based on this: we want a policy of cheap land and we want a policy of cheap labour. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the policy that this government has pursued since 1981. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why female workers and male workers in this province have suffered a decline in their real income all throughout Saskatchewan.

I could go on and on and read area after area, statistic after statistic, that deals with this question. I won't, because quite frankly the statistics speak for themselves. They show that the people and the working people of this province have suffered at the hands of this government and suffered at the hands of this government's cruelty because of the policy of cheap land and the policy of cheap labour.

Now let's deal with the question of cheap labour first of all . . . cheap land, excuse me, Mr. Speaker. We know that in the Premier's speech he talked about cheap land that's available for outside investors. He talked about foreign investors finding cheap land in Saskatchewan attractive. He talked about the opportunities that cheap land represented to foreign investors in Saskatchewan. And what has he done? What has he done to pursue that, and what has that government done to pursue that? Well they set up the Saskatchewan government growth fund, the SGGF.

And the SGGF was set up, the Saskatchewan government growth fund was set up to allow offshore investors, primarily from Hong Kong and Macau — and that's in the statements of the people who set up the Saskatchewan government growth fund — to invest in Saskatchewan so that (a) they get Canadian citizenship, and (b) they get tax advantages by investing in Saskatchewan.

And where do you think the Saskatchewan government growth fund is going to invest, Mr. Speaker? Where do you think the \$34 million that is available in this year, and this year alone, is going to end up being invested? Well the Premier says it's available for investment all across the

piece, that's it's available for investment in small business, any kind of small-business opportunities that the growth fund deems advisable.

Mr. Speaker, we know where the funds in the Saskatchewan growth fund are going to end up. We know that that is where prairie agricultural services, the private land bank set up by that government, is going to get its funding. We know that off-shore investors are being given opportunities to invest in Saskatchewan land through the Saskatchewan growth fund, transferring the money to Prairie Agricultural Services, Prairie Agricultural Services, so that they can buy up farm land here in Saskatchewan — turn Saskatchewan farmers into tenant farmers.

**An Hon. Member:** — Feudalism.

**Mr. Lyons:** — Feudalism. They talk about going into the future, Mr. Speaker. The future in Saskatchewan is not a return to feudalism.

**An Hon. Member:** — Serf training program.

**Mr. Lyons:** — We're not interested in serf training programs. We're not interested in developing a kulak class in this province.

**An Hon. Member:** — Pleasant peasants.

**Mr. Lyons:** — We are not interested in developing, as my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, says, peasant peasants, but that government is, because that government is committed — it is committed. Your government is committed to a policy of cheap land, and they're going to achieve that policy by driving thousands and thousands of farmers off this land — the thousands and thousands of farmers that they have already driven off this land; the three farm families a day which are leaving this land; those farm families that the Premier of this province is foreclosing on as the Minister of Agriculture; those farm families that the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier of this province, has put his name to in terms of developing a death warrant for those foreclosures.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier of this province is committed to a cheap land policy for foreign investors and the proof is in the pudding. We've seen the thousands and thousands of farm families leave this province since 1982. That Premier is committed to his cheap land policy at the expense of Saskatchewan farm families.

Mr. Speaker, the members on this side of the House long ago, in 1944 and 1945, made it a principle that Saskatchewan land belonged to Saskatchewan farm families. We say no to cheap land, Mr. Speaker. We're saying no to the sell-off of Saskatchewan farm land. We're saying no to that kind of privatization to foreign investors of Saskatchewan land.

We're saying no to a cheap land policy, Mr. Speaker, but we are saying yes to Saskatchewan farm families owning Saskatchewan farm land. And, Mr. Speaker, you can be assured that after the next election there will be policies in place to pursue that path because members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, know that one of the jobs that



we're going to have to do is to rebuild rural Saskatchewan. We know one of the jobs we're going to have to do is find methods and mechanisms to attract people back onto the land. We know that people on this side of the House are committed to that because we know that without a viable rural Saskatchewan there is no viable Saskatchewan; that without lots and lots and lots of people being productive on the land and productive in small rural communities, that there will be fewer jobs and fewer jobs opportunities, not only in rural Saskatchewan but in urban Saskatchewan.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House are saying no, no to the cheap land policy of the Devine PC government.

Mr. Speaker, but I wonder what those rural members on that side of the House say to the Premier and his cheap land policy. What does the member from Biggar say, Mr. Speaker? It's when the Premier says cheap land, is he talking about that member's land, or his neighbour's land, or his friend's land? Is he in favour of a cheap land policy? Is he in favour of lowering the asset base of his friends and neighbours, Mr. Speaker? Let's hear from the member from Biggar during this debate, Mr. Speaker. I would be pleased, pleased to listen to that member give his opinion on the Premier's cheap land policy.

Or how about the member from Redberry? Agricultural community — how about the member from Redberry? Agricultural community, a community dependent on agriculture. What does that member have to say about the Premier when the Premier says what we need is cheap land, and what we need is to sell off Saskatchewan farm land to foreign investors, and what we need to do is get rid of Saskatchewan farm land so that these foreign investors can come up and buy that cheap land? What does that member think about that particular policy? We'll be here. We on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, are going to be more than pleased, more than pleased to hear that kind of response.

Or how about the member, Mr. Speaker, from Shellbrook-Torch River, another agricultural constituency. Does he favour the Premier's policy of cheap land and cheap labour? Is he one of those who when it comes to voting in caucus that that will be the economic policy of the government — cheap land and cheap labour — which way did he vote in caucus, Mr. Speaker, on that? Was he in favour of lowering the asset value of the farm land of his friends and neighbours and his own supporters? Is he voting for cheap land? because I think he is, Mr. Speaker. I think that he is so wedded, so tightly wedded to that right-wing ideology of free enterprise and foreign enterprise, that that member there would sell his own friends and neighbours down the river for the sake . . . sacrifice them on the altar of cheap land and cheap labour. I bet you he voted for it, Mr. Speaker. I bet you, I would bet you any money on that, right?

I think, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes down to it — and you will see, and those members will get their opportunity to vote — when it comes to voting on this budget, this budget is an economic document which supports the Premier's policy of cheap land and cheap labour, we will see how those rural members sitting on

the government side of the House vote, Mr. Speaker. We will see whether they're voting for cheap land for their neighbours, of their neighbours. We will see whether they're going to vote to drop the asset value of their friends, of their neighbours, and of their supporters. We're going to see whether they vote to decrease the asset value of their own farm families through this cheap land, cheap labour policy.

The people of Saskatchewan will be watching through our eyes, Mr. Speaker. They will determine at the next polls, and they will determine because they're determining it now, whether or not they want to see farm families driven off the land here in Saskatchewan so that the farm land is overturned to foreign investors through the Saskatchewan government growth fund. We know that Prairie Agricultural Services is a nice little private company set up, set up so that the Saskatchewan government growth fund can provide foreign investment into Saskatchewan farm land.

We know that mechanism. We've learned that game. We've seen how they do it, Mr. Speaker, and we know that that is an integral part of the Premier's financial strategy, or otherwise why would he say it? Why would the Premier say it? He was speaking before a group of Conservatives, at a Conservative Party function in Moose Jaw. He was talking to Tories about what the economic strategy of the Tory party was going to be, and of his government. And what did he say to those group of Tories? He said, we're going to turn Saskatchewan into a haven from foreign investors. We're going to turn Saskatchewan into a haven where they can pick up at bargain basement prices cheap land and cheap labour, Mr. Speaker. They're going to sell off Saskatchewan farm families to foreign investors in order that they're able to . . .

**The Speaker:** — It being 5 o'clock, the House now is recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.