

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour for me to have the opportunity to introduce four very special guests seated in your gallery — four Canadian heroes. Captain Claire Plamondon, Corporal Greg Ebert, Corporal Don Nicholson, and Private Virginia Hobday have just recently returned to Canada and to their home base at CFB (Canadian Forces Base) Moose Jaw from their service in the Persian Gulf.

Captain Plamondon, a nurse; Corporal Ebert, a medical assistant; and Private Hobday, a supply technician, all served in a Canadian field hospital in Jubayl where wounded soldiers from both the allied and the Iraqi sides were treated.

Corporal Nicholson is a mobile support equipment operator and undertook general transport duties in support of operations at the Canada Dry One base in Qatar.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the government and the people of Saskatchewan to welcome them not only to the House today, but also to welcome them home.

I would also like to express our province's pride, admiration, and gratitude to these four men and women and indeed to all the Canadian troops who served our country so courageously and so magnificently in the recent Gulf conflict.

If I may say, Mr. Speaker, what these young men and women did cannot be overstated. To travel half-way around the world to a place that a few months ago most Canadians knew almost nothing about, to participate in a major world conflict under extremely harsh and difficult conditions, and to perform every job that was asked of them with such a high degree of skill and confidence, this takes a special kind of person. It takes a tremendous degree of courage and determination and self-discipline, and we in Canada are indeed very fortunate to have people of this calibre serving in our country's forces.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to acknowledge the sacrifices made by the families of these four individuals, and of all the Canadian forces, families who had to live with uncertainty and fear and indeed, loneliness for their loved ones stationed in the Gulf. Canadians are extremely fortunate to have such a highly dedicated and professional armed forces.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say to these young men and women: welcome to the Legislative Assembly today. Welcome home and congratulations for a job very well done. Thank you, we're very proud of you and God bless.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to extend a welcome to the four members of our armed forces who are here today, and express our appreciation for the role that they play in the peacekeeping efforts for which Canada has developed a long-standing reputation.

As the Premier has mentioned, too often the role that the families play and the sacrifices that the families make are forgotten, and we should not forget that. And I think that that is important to acknowledge. So that the families of these people who are in the gallery as our guests today, we want to also express our appreciation and acknowledge the difficult times which they have experienced during this period of time.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, also that I know that it is well-known that Canada has had a long reputation as playing an important peacemaking and peacekeeping role in the world. That reputation we have, Mr. Speaker, is to a large extent because of the type of people we have serving in our armed forces in this country.

For that I want to, on behalf of the opposition, express our appreciation to the guests who are with us today, welcome them back home, and wish them well in all of their future careers.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you, sir, and through you to all members of the House, a group of 60 grade 5 and 6 students from St. Margaret School in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, St. Margaret School is located in the constituency of Moose Jaw South, but because it serves as the French immersion school for the Catholic system for the whole city of Moose Jaw, these students come from all parts of the city.

With them today, Mr. Speaker, their teachers Lyne Dubé, Vic Lavallée, and Richard Turcotte and their bus driver Linda.

I sincerely hope that the students from St. Margaret today enjoy their visit in the legislature, enjoy question period, and I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you right after question period along with the member from Moose Jaw North. I would ask all members to welcome these students.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too had wanted to add my congratulations to that of the Premier and the member opposite and congratulations to our members in the Canadian Armed Forces. I've had the opportunity and the pleasure to represent CFB Moose Jaw for the last six years as MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

And having attended many graduations and functions at Canadian Forces Base Moose Jaw, I can assure the

members of the legislature and people around Saskatchewan that the quality of the training, the dedication of the people stationed there is without parallel, and I know that the record that our forces exhibited in the Gulf, where they were forced into all sorts of roles in their duties as members of the United Nations forces, that they acquitted themselves just absolutely wonderfully, and Canada is very proud of them.

And I just look forward to attending my next function at CFB Moose Jaw and talking to people that actually had the opportunity to take part in that action. So I too would ask members to congratulate the members of CFB Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce to you and everyone assembled here today, the members of the House and everyone else, Arlene Harris, who is seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, with her family. I will have more to say about her when I do ministerial statement following question period, but I wanted to use this opportunity to introduce to everyone here Arlene Harris who is the recipient of the Saskatchewan Consumer Award of Excellence and I'll have more to say about her and her family during the ministerial statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member from Thunder Creek and myself share in common being home, our constituencies, to members of CFB Moose Jaw. While the base is located in Thunder Creek, many of the personnel from CFB Moose Jaw live in the constituency of Moose Jaw South and in the constituency of Moose Jaw North. And I want to share with other members, to say simply to you folks, as I'm sure is felt by your families, I know is felt by every member of this House, we simply say: thank God for your safe return.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with my colleague, the member from Moose Jaw South, in expressing welcome to the contingent from St. Margaret School here. As the member from Moose Jaw South indicated, St. Margaret is a French immersion K to 8 school for the separate school system for all of Moose Jaw. And many of the students who are here attending today are constituents in Moose Jaw North.

I would also like to add to that, Mr. Speaker, it is a rare and indeed special occasion that very rarely happens that as members of the Legislative Assembly we have one of our own children attend . . . visit to the Assembly as a contingent of a school group. And my daughter, Meredith, is with the group here today. And I simply like to recognize her presence and ask all members to join in welcoming again the group from St. Margaret. I look forward to joining with the member from Moose Jaw South in the visit following.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly today 13 students who are attending today's proceedings of the legislature. They are living at Dale's House in the constituency of Regina Rosemont. They're accompanied by their teacher, Pam Metz, and their chaperons, Costa Yannikostas and Jim Tarnowski, and I'd ask all members to welcome these students here today to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Funding for Home Care

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, the new policy of your department in regards to hospital care would seem to be to take patients out of the hospital early and leave it up to home care to take up the slack.

However, there has not been a sufficient corresponding increase in home-care funding in order to compensate for the extra work-load that they are going to have to take on. A \$1.8 million increase to home care is not sufficient to compensate for a \$40 million shortfall with respect to institutions and care homes. This is going to result in inadequate follow-up services, Mr. Minister.

Why are you penalizing, Mr. Minister, the sick and the elderly people because of your government's economic mismanagement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, we made it very clear in the budget that . . . and the early announcement as I have said earlier in the House other days, that the three and a half per cent increase to hospitals would be difficult for those hospitals to make their plans and to develop their budgets for the current year. They've been developing those plans since February, have them now complete, and for the most part have them delivered to the public and to their staff.

We also made it clear that there is a shift going on, and the hon. member makes reference to that shift in terms of . . . to more of a community-based service, home care being one of those community-based services. There's a 6 per cent increase in this budget for home care in recognition of that changing trend and in recognition of the pressures that are on home care.

And I'll be very quick to say, Mr. Speaker, that I don't for a moment suggest that there should be a comparison dollar for dollar, as the hon. member tends to do, a shortfall in the hospitals as a dollar-for-dollar comparison to home care, that it would not be a valid comparison.

But I would say, Mr. Speaker, as well, that yes, home care will be under pressure. They know that. We've had good discussions with the home care association of the province. They have said, as they have said in press, they believe they can cope although there may be some difficulty.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Minister, you've just admitted by your comment that you're penalizing sick and elderly people who are being discharged from hospitals because home care is not going to be able to deal with the work-load. You've just admitted that, Mr. Minister.

But what you didn't reveal in your budget is that you will be increasing fees for home-care services by an estimated 15 per cent. You won't fund hospitals to a required level, so people have to return to their homes to recover, and then you charge them more for the privilege to do so. Mr. Minister, once again, why are you penalizing the sick and elderly in this province twice?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, the member tends to — you know it's not the first — tends to overdramatize the issue and the various issues surrounding health care. And I think that's clear for all to see and it has been for a long time, for months, maybe even years.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says, you won't fund hospitals to the required level. I believe those were her exact words. You won't fund hospitals to the required level. The question that that conjures up, Mr. Speaker, is what is the required level? What's the required level in the plan of the NDP (New Democratic Party)? What's the required level in the plan of the NDP?

Their plan is to criticize, to put the blinders on, to not recognize in any way the fiscal and the economic reality of this province, this million people, these taxpayers in this province with a very excellent, very large, very complex, and very expensive health-care system that is under some pressure but is running well and will continue to serve our public very, very well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Minister, you're sending people home early from the hospital and you're not providing adequately for follow-up services. And I say that the sick and the elderly are paying for your incompetence and mismanagement as a result of your huge deficit.

Now the only way the home-care people found out about your 15 per cent increase, estimated 15 per cent increase in fees, was by reading it in the newspaper, Mr. Minister. Now what sort of consultation process is that, Mr. Minister? Is this how your government consults in the budgetary process by using the media to announce decisions that you've made?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, my earlier answer is the substance of her question, but I reject, I absolutely reject to this House that the home-care association found out about the increase in fees by reading it in a newspaper. It is simply, Mr. Speaker, very clearly it is simply not the case. The home-care association were briefed by me personally before it was ever in the newspaper. So, Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely the case

and the hon. member once again comes forward with information that is far from accurate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Education

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and it concerns the government's lack of support for education as outlined in this week's budget. The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association issued a press release on Monday which reads in part:

Education underfunding affects people. For Saskatchewan citizens this budget means higher local taxes; for teachers and other school division staff it means lost jobs; for Saskatchewan communities it means the closure of schools; and for children, this budget means the quality of education is threatened.

Mr. Minister, I would like you to explain to the public why your government has chosen as an education policy, through underfunding, tax increases for people, lost jobs for people, school closures for people, and a threat toward quality of education for our Saskatchewan young people. Why have you chosen that route, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Well, Mr. Speaker, not too long ago I made the comment in this House that the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association were indicating that the Saskatchewan education system is one of the best in the world. And I think we can all be very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time I would suggest that that will continue because education remains a priority of this government. The fact of the matter is, that there has been a decline in enrolment in several areas of the province, particularly rural Saskatchewan. And there has been the need for some boards . . . and I would point out, Mr. Speaker, it's school boards that have the authority to make decisions whether or not schools are down-sized or whether in fact schools are being closed.

And I would point out as well, Mr. Speaker, that because of the co-operation that exists between school boards in this province, that we see the concern about the quality of education and how the rural decline can be countered. And I point out to an article in the paper that I have here, Mr. Speaker, with regard to Lemberg and Neudorf. Two school systems that have been operating as consolidated school systems for many, many years, who now have an agreement between them where they are going to have the K to 6 children housed in one particular centre and the 7 to 12 housed in another centre.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's the type of decision that school boards in rural Saskatchewan are making today to ensure that the children have a quality education, and I really commend them for that.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — New question to the minister. Mr. Minister, the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) release states:

... because of the way operating grants are distributed, many boards will actually receive a decrease in provincial funds. Rural school divisions, because of declining enrolments, are hardest hit by this budget.

The April edition of *The School Trustee*, the publication of the SSTA states that the grants going to rural school boards this year increase by only .8 of 1 per cent, Mr. Minister.

Now how on earth can you say to the public of this province that education is a priority of your government when we see massive school closures in rural Saskatchewan, massive teacher lay-offs in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, and a budget increase of .8 of 1 per cent. How on earth is that a major priority on the part of the Government of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Well it's interesting what the member opposite says, Mr. Speaker, because the fact of the matter is — and she quite often does not care to deal with facts; she develops her own figures — the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that of all of the school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan this year, 62 of them get a larger grant this year than they did last; 47 get less.

The biggest reason, Mr. Speaker, why boards are getting less money this year is because of a decline in enrolment, a decline in enrolment.

I would also point out, when this member talks about the cut-back in positions of teachers, that during the last 10 years, Mr. Speaker, the school enrolment in this province has declined by 6,000 students, and at the same time, Mr. Speaker, the number of teachers being employed has gone up by 626.

Now is it any wonder that boards where they are faced today with tighter times, that they have to cut some positions to be a little bit more efficient? And I commend them for doing that. But, Mr. Speaker, it is the boards that have the authority to cut back on schools, school closures. They are managing efficiently and, Mr. Speaker, we are spending over \$900 million on education in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, that's commitment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Supplementary to this Minister of Education: I cannot believe it, Mr. Minister, that you commend the closure of rural schools and you commend job lay-off in rural Saskatchewan. I can't believe that a Minister of Education which is supposed to defend education in this province is in fact supporting rural school closures and massive teacher lay-off.

Now, Mr. Minister, *The School Trustee* indicates on its front page that somebody's child is everybody's future. Given this government's underfunding and mismanagement is robbing the province of Saskatchewan of its future, Mr. Minister, we can no longer have trite excuses from the members opposite.

How do you explain to the children of this province, that their education and their future is not a priority of the PC (Progressive Conservative) Government of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the opposition didn't have a plan when they were in power and they still don't have one today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Now let me just talk a little bit about that. Let me just talk a little bit about that. When she talks about massive closures of schools, I would point out to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that there were more schools closed in the 1970s under that administration than there have been under this administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Let me also point out that the spending on K to 12 education in this province has gone up 72 per cent since 1982 — 72 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

And one final comment. This government has spent over \$640 million on school construction in the last nine years. Where were they in all of the good years with all of the schools that needed repair and new schools that needed to be built during their time in administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Family Income Plan

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, in your budget last week you cut the amount of money for payments under the Family Income Plan by \$6 million. You cut that budget by 45 per cent. Family Income Plan benefits go to the working poor, Mr. Minister, to low-income families who have children and who, because of very low salaries, require an income supplement to ensure that their children are properly housed, clothed, and fed.

Now, Mr. Minister, because of your policy Saskatchewan already has the highest rate of child poverty in Canada. One out of four children in this province are living in poverty. In light of this fact, Mr. Minister, can you explain to us today why you have removed \$6 million from a plan specifically designed to help low-income children in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, once again the opposition is proving that they know not whereof they

speak. And when they don't understand something properly, I guess it is incumbent upon me to clarify the matter for the hon. member.

Essentially what has happened in the . . . First of all, let me assure everyone out there right now that is in need of financial assistance, there have been no cuts anywhere in the budget to anyone who is dependent upon social assistance or the Family Income Plan. There have been no cuts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: — Now, Mr. Speaker, it is true that I have taken it upon myself to be as responsible a minister as possible in letting the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what is being spent in the Department of Social Services. And one of the things that I have insisted upon in this budget is to tell the people the way it is so that they can understand.

In previous blue books records you will find that there is a higher number attributed to the Family Income Plan, but that amount was never used. It was never applied for. The utilization rate was not there. What this budget is doing now is facing that reality and putting the figures so that people can understand this is what was spent last year in anticipation of that. This is what is going to be spent this year. There is no cut to anyone who is receiving the Family Income Plan. They are receiving the same amount, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Mr. Minister, the reductions in spending to fight child poverty have nothing to do with a lack of need for help. You've got more than 3,000 children a month using the Regina Food Bank; more than 3,000 children a month using the Saskatoon Food Bank. The reductions in the use of your program, Mr. Minister, are because you have dramatically changed the rules for eligibility of the Family Income Plan, making it impossible for most people to be eligible, and because you never advertise the program any more.

Mr. Minister, my question is: won't you acknowledge that you are in fact destroying the Family Income Plan in the province? That's what you've done and that's what this budget puts the finishing touches to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, once more the hon. member speaks out of both sides of his mouth, and I suggest to you that he can't have it both ways. Right now he was accusing this government of not advertising. He was accusing us of not advertising the program; and on the same hand they are accusing us of doing too much advertising. Now which way do you want it? Do you want us to advertise or do you want us not to advertise?

And I repeat, Mr. Speaker, as far as the needy people of this province is concerned, we will be there; our support is there; it will continue to be there. And, Mr. Speaker, my concern as Minister of Social Services is to see to it that the citizens of this province have that support system there. But my greater concern is to get them off that relief, to get them off of the dependency upon government, as members opposite would like to see, and put them back as self-supporting, productive members of society. That is our concern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, we're talking about an income supplement for working people in this province and their families, not people on . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, while you're cutting the Family Income Plan, you are . . .

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

I'm sure that hon. members are having difficulty hearing the member, and let us give hon. members that opportunity.

Order, order.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A new question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, while you're cutting the Family Income Plan, you are increasing your rental payments to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation by \$4 million, in this case a 45 per cent increase. So, Mr. Minister, we have a 45 per cent cut in income supplements to working families with children, low-income, working families, and we have a 45 per cent increase in payments for office rental and furnishings in your department.

Now, Mr. Minister, why don't you cancel the 45 per cent increase in office administration, supplies, and furnishings in your department and put that money in to the Family Income Plan to assist low-income children in this province?

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, once again the first billion dollar man of the Saskatchewan legislature speaks. I guess what I would ask the hon. member, the extra money that you're asking us to spend now, is that still part of the first billion, or are you starting to work on your second . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, there are no cuts in this budget. I am very, very proud of how my department and my department officials have been able to advise me on the method of supporting the needy families in this province, admittedly, Mr. Speaker, with not as much money as last year. My department took a .75 per cent cut. And yet we are delivering services. We have increased funding to all front line services, to foster

homes, to all of those people out there that are dependent upon this government. We have increased funding or maintained it. We have not, Mr. Speaker, resulted in cuts to the needy in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Hunger Programs

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the minister responsible for the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order, order. Our friend the Minister of Justice seems to certainly want to get into the debate today. But you haven't been asked a question and I ask you to refrain from answering them.

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I say my question is to the minister responsible for families. Mr. Minister, last year your budget department had about \$740,000 in its budget in programs to feed hungry children. Now that wasn't very much, Mr. Minister, but at least it was something.

This year, however, that amount of money is indeed conspicuous by its absence from this budget. Yet at the same time, Mr. Minister, you personally are prepared to defend your government's policy of paying Chuck Childers almost three-quarters of a million dollars a year in salaries and benefits.

Mr. Minister, when the 22,000 Saskatchewan children using food banks ask you to feed them, when they come to you and say that they are hungry, are you prepared today to stand on your feet in this House and say to them what you said earlier on this week? Are you prepared to say to hungry children, so what?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, we're used to extreme statements from the member from Rosemont. This is the same man that equated George Bush with Saddam Hussein, so we're used to the most outrageous statements from the man.

I'm pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that the \$740,000 that was introduced last year for the feeding programs around the province . . . which I must say was extremely well received, and we did it in partnership with communities and school boards and teachers and professionals throughout the system. They thought it was well received and well done, Mr. Speaker.

That was last year announced as a three-year program, Mr. Speaker, so he should be aware of that. We announced that last year. It's a three-year program. It goes this year, next year as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cuts to Public Service Commission

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you again. A new question to the same minister. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed very interesting,

Mr. Minister, when you find that you can feed Chuck Childers three-quarters of a million dollar year over one year, but in fact you have to feed hungry kids three quarters of a million dollars over two years.

But, Mr. Minister, I want to talk to you about another little episode in your departmental activities. This week we've seen you carry out an extensive advertising campaign around National Consumer Week and Volunteer Week, spending tens of thousands of dollars of advertising around the province. In fact, on Tuesday of this week these ads began to appear throughout Saskatchewan, on Tuesday of this week.

Yet, Mr. Minister, my question to you is this: on the same day that these ads began to appear around the province of Saskatchewan, you fired three people from your department. Now, Mr. Minister, when those people come to you and ask you — what about my job? What about my family? — what kind of response are you going to give them, Mr. Minister? Are you going to tell them, so what, as well? Is that going to be your response?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, there's two answers here. First of all, on his first question, his first comment, I agree. I agree that the amount of money that Chuck Childers gets is a lot of money. But it's not the government's responsibility to decide how much he gets paid. It's been privatized. It's the potash . . . it's their decision who gets the money.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, on the other issue of . . . Mr. Speaker, several months ago, we entered into negotiations with the . . . (inaudible) . . . without their support — Sask Sport, Saskatchewan cultural organizations and the recreation organizations in the province — and talked to them about the possibility of taking over the lottery money so let them make the decisions as to who would get the money and what programs should be around.

Over the last 20, 25 years, Mr. Speaker, the volunteer group in this province has matured to such a state it may very well be the best organized and, I think, the best in the country. I think I can say it is the best in the country. They are ready to do that now, Mr. Speaker. They wanted that responsibility. We gave them that responsibility. When we transferred . . . Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Saskatchewan Consumer Award of Excellence Recipient

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce the 1991 recipient of the Saskatchewan Consumer Award of Excellence to this Assembly. Seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, with her family, is Arlene Harris of Regina who I ask to rise and be acknowledged.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Harris will receive the 1991 Consumer Award of Excellence for her outstanding work in helping consumers, especially disadvantaged consumers, make the best use of their own resources. Her skills as a home economist and educator have helped many Saskatchewan families and individuals to solve their own problems. Hon. members will appreciate that the presentation of the Consumer Award of Excellence to Arlene Harris is a highlight of National Consumer Week in Saskatchewan.

This marks the second time, only the second time, Mr. Speaker, National Consumer Week has been observed. In proclaiming this special week I have emphasized how important the theme for the week is to Saskatchewan. The theme, Mr. Speaker is: "Team Up for a Stronger Marketplace" — consumers, business, government.

National Consumer Week is an opportunity to build partnerships between consumers, business, and government. Arlene Harris worked vividly . . . her work vividly demonstrates that we make the best use of our resources and strengthen our families in the market-place by working together. Working together is a Saskatchewan way.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge hon. members, consumers and business people to join with the Family Foundation in building these strengths together during this National Consumer Week in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in about 20 minutes, at 3 o'clock today in room 218, we'll be making the presentation to Mrs. Harris, and her family will be there of course. And I invite all members of the House to join us in room 218 as they may come in and have a cup of tea and have an opportunity to talk and meet Mrs. Harris and her family. I would ask all members to recognize Mrs. Harris.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the opposition critic for Consumer and Commercial Affairs I want to immediately take the opportunity, as I hope to again later during the presentation, to congratulate Mrs. Harris on her reception of the prestigious award. Her contribution to consumer interests in our province as the minister has identified, is well-known and worthy of the presentation, Mr. Speaker. And I join with the minister and I'm sure all members of the House in offering our congratulations to Mrs. Harris. This is National Consumer Week, Mr. Speaker, but frankly, Mr. Speaker, I wish that this minister and this government provided something for the consumer of Saskatchewan other than the kind of rhetoric that we've heard today and before today.

Mr. Speaker, this is the minister and his cabinet who presided over the destruction of the Department of Consumer and Commercial Affairs in the province. We have no department for consumer affairs in Saskatchewan. We had one. And, Mr. Speaker, we had a good department with good people working in that department, doing good work. The day that this minister puts ads in the papers for National Consumer Week, what does he do? This same minister fires those good people -

fires the people that were serving the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, if I may say, if there is one thing this government could do for consumers in Saskatchewan, it is as early as possible call an election and let's get rid of this PST (provincial sales tax), this provincial goods and services tax. That's the best thing they could do for the consumer in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 72 — An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act

Hon. Mr. Wolfe: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Northern Municipalities 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 by the Hon. Mr. Hepworth that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I left off my remarks yesterday at 5 o'clock, I had been talking about some of the accusations that came from across the floor from members opposite about the deficit that this province has and the claim that it has all come about since 1982.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP like to make that false claim that the province had a surplus of funds when they left office. In fact, after years of record commodity prices, favourable weather conditions, the province was in debt.

Mr. Speaker, 1982 the province was in debt after some of the best years that we've had. The NDP shamelessly squandered the money that they had, the opportunities that they had, and left us penniless to face the ravages of drought, world subsidy wars, all those things that have hit us in the last six and seven years.

Now the debt that was hidden in the Crowns, Mr. Speaker, in 1982 totalled over \$3 billion, in 1982. In 1991 dollars, that would have been \$5 billion, Mr. Speaker, \$5 billion in debt. Mr. Speaker, on top of that, when we took office in 1982, we also found that there was a \$1.5 billion debt in the teachers' pension fund, unfunded liabilities; a \$3.5 billion deficit in the government employees' pension fund; 900 million had been taken from the Heritage Fund and was given to Crown corporations. The deficit of over 200 million in the Heritage Fund. There was no surplus; there was no

surplus.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote now, if I may, from *Hansard*, from *Public Accounts* December 1, 1982. And at that time the person questioning was the former member for Rosthern, Mr. Ralph Katzman. When he came to this office in 1982 after the Tory victory, he put his talents to work in trying to find out exactly where the province was as far as its fiscal stand was. Those who know Mr. Katzman know that he has an eye and a nose for money, and he is very, very aware of responsibility and fiscal responsibility especially.

(1445)

When the former member came across these hidden deficits, Mr. Speaker, the member for Regina Centre was the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. And I want to quote from the *Hansard* of that day with regards to the unfunded liabilities. I quote the hon. member from December 1, 1982, *Public Accounts* proceedings:

This is a lesson on how not to set up a pension plan. This is an apt lesson on how not to set up a pension plan. The difficulties with pension plans are that we politicians tend to live for the moment. Our time horizons are normally next month, sometimes next year but never beyond the next election."

And that was the hon. member for Regina Centre saying that, an NDP member admitting that they had made an error. It's no wonder they don't have a plan to offer to Saskatchewan.

Their time horizon is not towards the future, not long-term planning, but at the very most next month, next week, maybe next election. And they still cling to their outmoded and failed ideas. A moratorium. The Leader of the Opposition said they're going to put a moratorium on farm foreclosures. And then he said, it isn't going to do any good but we're going to do it anyhow. I mean those are the kind of the ideas they have.

But to get back to my comments I started with, I want to quote further for the member from Regina Centre:

The problem with these things is that it's a very long-run problem. You can do something today which is not terribly responsible, and you are not going to pick up the tab for many years to come. That's why the idea of having pensions negotiated between employees and the government of the day, is not a wise one because the problems come back to haunt you so far in the future and we politicians aren't always cognizant of what's going to happen in the next decade. We have this terrible fear that it may be our worst enemies who have to face the problem in 10 years time. Therefore why worry about it?

Well why worry about it, Mr. Speaker? Why worry about it? This is coming from the hon. member who was the minister of Finance and who now complains about waste and mismanagement. And he says that they just went ahead and set this up, took the money in, spent it

foolishly, and they thought they'd never have to worry about it because probably their worst enemies would be in office.

Well I guess judging from the comments, he was right. The NDP's worst enemies are in office — the Tories. And it's our government who has to face these unfunded liabilities, these hidden deficits, and deal with them today.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote one final item from those proceedings that day, and I quote the member for Regina Centre:

These are really startling figures. And I remember Mr. Lutz (who was then the provincial auditor) raising this at the orientation seminar. This unfunded liability is somewhere in the same neighbourhood . . . (of the total provincial debt.) Three point something billion comes to mind. Unfunded liabilities in these pension plans stand near equal to the debt of the province.

Mr. Speaker, that comes from the member for Regina Centre who was the chairman of Public Accounts, a member of the NDP front bench when they were in government, a member of the opposition now, who says there's waste and mismanagement in government.

Mr. Speaker, what hypocrisy. What more can I say? We are now paying for the evils of yesterday, and we're asked to pay for it at a time when we have no money.

Mr. Speaker, those are extremely, extremely sad things that we have to talk about. But when you talk about mismanagement . . . the NDP opposition likes to talk about failed projects that the Government of Saskatchewan between 1982 and 1991 has been involved in. And I suppose, as I said yesterday, there's a possibility that all governments will become embroiled in some problems — pot calling the kettle black.

Well let's just tally up some of the things, because they're very fond of tallying up the deficit that we have and saying it's because of waste and mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, I've just outlined waste and mismanagement at its utmost, taking the pension money from public servants, from teachers, taking that money. And instead of investing it in a proper account as this government has done, they spent it on buying potash mines, potash mines — didn't create any new jobs, Mr. Speaker. They spent the money to further their ideological dreams.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's very sad; it's very, very sad to see this happening. And then members opposite stand up and sanctimoniously say that they are the protectors, and they are only ones that can manage and can handle this tough time we're in. They're the only ones who ever had a balanced budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we robbed teachers, if we robbed government employees as they did, we might be able to balance our budget too at this time without any tax increases.

But, Mr. Speaker, that is not what we're about. Honesty, integrity, truth, responsibility — we put in our plans for the next three years. We lay out a tax regime in our

budget, Mr. Speaker, so that the countryside can see what we're about. We put it forward so that people may judge us before the fact, not after the fact.

Members opposite went into elections promising the moon. They went into elections saying, oh yes there's no problem; we won't have a deficit. In 1982 in their last budget I think they overestimated oil revenues by 180 per cent, potash revenues by 170 per cent. If we were fiscally irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, we could write in any number we wanted to as well.

In our budget, I believe oil prices are calculated around \$20.85 — realistic, Mr. Speaker. Other governments may not be quite so realistic. Alberta I note, is in at about \$23. They're quite optimistic. We didn't pencil in \$30 a barrel in order to come up with the numbers that the Minister of Finance put together. We put it in at realistic numbers, Mr. Speaker.

Now sometimes the truth hurts but you have to face it and that means you have some tough choices to make. And that's what this whole budget is about, Mr. Speaker — choices, choices — the choice between honest and up front with the electorate or hiding in the bushes telling them, the world is fine, don't worry about it. We'll look after you; don't worry about it. Don't worry about it, we'll look after you, government will take care of you. Big Brother will look after everything.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the thinking of the '60s and of the '70s. That's dead. It's as dead as the wethead and polyester suits. And the Leader of the Opposition should take note of that, Mr. Speaker. There is no going back to those old times as much as members opposite would like to. They'd like to rest secure in the knowledge that the Regina Manifesto is a new idea.

They took heart in the fact that an NDP government was elected in Ontario. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's possible that in Ontario the deficit that that government, the NDP government in Ontario, could run up, will be greater. The deficit will be greater than the entire budget for Saskatchewan in one year under an NDP administration.

And today we saw members asking the Minister of Social Services about our funding for those in need and saying that there had been cut-backs. Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been no cut-backs. The minister answered the question truthfully and forthrightly. What he said was, we put in the same amount of money that was utilized last year. You may have 10 million in the budget but you only utilized 7. Fair enough. People only apply for seven, that's the number you should be using, reflecting truly, truly the situation.

In Ontario under an NDP government, headlines are reading now that the welfare workers, not the recipients, but the welfare workers are saying that it's run amok, that it's absolutely ludicrous. And we see a government duly elected, duly elected, putting forward the largest deficit in the history of that province — a deficit, a deficit bigger than the whole entire Saskatchewan budget. And that's the NDP idea of management? That's the NDP idea of management?

And when you look at the promises, at the promises of the Government of Ontario who were then in opposition, NDP opposition at the time, they promised the moon. They promised the moon. Because in their wildest dream they never thought they'd be government. They never thought they'd have to live up to those promises.

But they've kept some of them. They've kept some of them, Mr. Speaker. They have, absolutely. We have a Morgentaler-type abortuary on every corner. No problem at all, Mr. Speaker. No problem there. They keep those promises.

But I go back to the fiscal responsibility, the billions of dollars. We're talking billions — perhaps six billions of dollars in a deficit, in a deficit. And some of the numbers I quoted to you from *Public Accounts* of the NDP of the '70s in Saskatchewan, well I guess I shouldn't be so hard on them. Compared to the NDP of the '90s, those guys were pikers.

You know it's amazing, Mr. Speaker, just amazing how members opposite can sit there and sanctimoniously look us in the eye and tell this government that we have wasted money — that we have wasted money.

We have spent money on programs that were needed. We have doubled the funding for health care, increased the funding for education at a time when student enrolment went down in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We've done those things. We've been there with home owner protection. We've been there with student summer job employment programs. We've been there for agriculture when it was needed, Mr. Speaker. We've done all those things. We've done those things.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite say waste and mismanagement. They say, oh yes, waste and mismanagement. Well I guess I could run through a list of waste and mismanagement that they went into when they were government, but I'll save that for another day. I'll just leave that for my friends across the floor to think about. We can go into waste and mismanagement any time they want.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this budget that the Minister of Finance on this side of the House has brought down seems like a fairly hard budget. And it is. It's honest. It's truthful. It's straightforward. It tells the people of Saskatchewan the way it really is. And that is what people are looking for today.

In the Department of Highways and Transportation, Mr. Speaker, yes we've had a reduction in our capital budget. But, Mr. Speaker, what that means is that we may not have as much new construction as some would like; perhaps not as much new construction as members on this side of the floor would like. But we have to hold our fiscal house in order. We have to get our fiscal house in order. We have to maintain a hold on that deficit which has grown during the time that we were government, responding to the needs of people, not to the needs of some ideology that was thought up by somebody who really didn't have a handle on the real world.

Mr. Speaker, in the Department of Highways and

Transportation, we have provided services. We have maintained the highway system. We are going to have the same highway system tomorrow as we had yesterday. And, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be in good condition. The maintenance budget has remained the same. It has not been trimmed back. We aren't going to build new highways.

But, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the members opposite asked me questions about that. And again I saw in some of the news reports, members opposite quoted as saying that a 7 per cent reduction in the Department of Highways capital budget would somehow translate into 3,000 lost jobs in rural Saskatchewan.

(1500)

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a hard time, a hard time following that because I don't know if people understand that with a 200-and-some million dollar budget in the Department of Highways, the department proper, that we have about 1,600 employees. Now we've had a 7 per cent reduction in the capital budget. I can't see how that translates into 3,000 lost jobs. I can see how it could create perhaps some situations where construction companies are going to be very, very close on their tendering, and are going to have some very, very sharp pencils, and that's fair enough.

But members opposite didn't tell you the whole story. They didn't tell you that in this last year we've seen a 30 per cent reduction in the price of asphalt. Last fall we were looking at asphalt prices 30 per cent higher than they are now because of world oil prices, because of the Gulf crisis. Now, Mr. Speaker, 30 per cent increase in asphalt, even if we would have had an increase in the department budget would still have meant less work. So, Mr. Speaker, asphalt prices down 30 per cent means that there will be work, there will be lots of work.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I tabled the 1991-92 construction project array. And if members opposite had time to go through it, they would have time to add up the numbers of kilometres of highway that's going to be built, the number of kilometres of highway that are going to be resurfaced, the number of bridges that are going to be repaired, and that doesn't include the safety projects that we go into, the upgrades that we go into, and a number of other items that we work on. We're looking at about 278 kilometres of highway to be graded, construction projects to be graded — 278 kilometres. Well that's a fair, good distance. We're looking at 569 to be surfaced, Mr. Speaker, resurfaced and surfaced. That's a fair, good, sizeable amount of work too I think, Mr. Speaker. And we're looking at perhaps 15 bridge projects.

Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of work. That's a lot of projects. So for them to say that it's going to translate into 3,000 lost jobs in the province of Saskatchewan is patently ridiculous. The member opposite quoted from an article in a newspaper yesterday when he was asking me questions about that. The critic for Highways was asking me questions about the Department of Highways budget — as is his right to do — and I responded as well as I could to the questions and provided the information that the member asked for.

The only thing that bothered me about his quoting from the article was he didn't quote all of the article, Mr. Speaker. He didn't go into all of it. He quoted the construction association as saying there was going to be lost jobs and that we needed more money to be spent on our highways and all the rest of it. But he didn't follow through with all of the article wherein the construction association recommends a dedicated fuel tax as a method to come up with the extra dollars. They acknowledge that we are in difficult economic times. They applaud our restraint procedures that we've had to go through in the Department of Highways because these are very, very astute business people. They applaud those measures and they say, look it would be nice if we had some more; we could use some more; we should have some more; the highway system could deteriorate in the future. All those things may be true. And they say, but we have a solution. We would like to see a cent a litre, perhaps 1 cent a litre, perhaps 2 cents a litre applied as a dedicated fuel tax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite if that is something that he would endorse — a dedicated fuel tax. He was willing enough to quote from the article and to accept their comments about job loss and to accept their perhaps condemnation of the Highways budget. He was willing to do that for political reasons. Well perhaps that's a bit unkind. He's not planning to run for office again, so maybe it wasn't for political reasons.

But just to help his memory just a bit, the rest of the article did talk about a dedicated fuel tax to be put towards highways. And I ask the member, you know, is that his stand? Is that what he supports, a dedicated fuel tax? One cent a litre means \$18 million; 2 cents a litre, \$36 million. Well that would certainly build a lot of miles of highway. Does the member opposite support that stand?

I just wish that members opposite could make up their mind where they are at. They're against raising taxes, they're against raising taxes. They're against cutting, they're against trimming, they're against fiscal management. They say, well we could do all these things because yes, well because we're the NDP and we know how to do it. That's their stand.

And we heard a member today, the billion dollar man, talk about all the different things that could be done in Department of Social Services if only the NDP were there. And the Minister of Social Services in his speech yesterday, went through the litany of those things and ran up the bill. And I believe we have got a billion dollar man in this Assembly, because that's what it's going to take to fulfil those promises.

And the members opposite don't want taxation. Oh, I forgot, they do. That's right, pardon me. They want to tax the big, bad oil companies. At least some of the members want to tax the big, bad oil companies. The leader says the big, bad oil companies are okay and he wouldn't tax them, but other members say they would. But then again maybe they won't. But then again they could. You're not too sure.

And what else are they going to tax? Oh they're going to tax the rich; they're going to tax the rich, the rich. Oh,

okay. Well that's an interesting concept, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how many people in Saskatchewan qualify for the terminology, the rich. But it's something that's easy to roll off your tongue. It fits into the rhetoric very easily. It's not something that makes a lot of sense, but it's easy to say.

And members opposite have had a habit of doing that over the years — always. If it was rhetoric that could build the world, they'd have built four of them. And we saw the Leader of the Opposition in his reply to the budget speech the other night, indulge in rhetoric, and only rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. No plan, no vision, strictly rhetoric. The biggest part of his plan was they were going to put a moratorium on farm foreclosures. And he acknowledged that wouldn't work. Long on rhetoric, short on action, no plan. NDP — no darned plan. That's what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Now it's tough in Saskatchewan. We have gone through some cycles in the province. We always do, Mr. Speaker. When you're tied to a resource base, that's what happens. But you've got to have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and tell the public of Saskatchewan where the province is at. You have to say: this is the cards we've been dealt; this is the way the numbers crunch out; these are the choices we have to make.

Mr. Speaker, if you lay those choices out honestly for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, if you tell them truthfully that this is what we have spent in health care, that these are the requirements and we've had an increase; and if you tell them truthfully that education, yes, it's one of the things that we're committed to and we need that, and we've had an increase in there; and if you look at agriculture and say it's the backbone of the province — 40 per cent of the jobs in Saskatchewan are tied to agriculture . . . and we have to support that industry, take it through these tough times, help the industry against the international subsidy wars, against countries that have multi, multibillion dollar economies.

Little old Saskatchewan, Canada, one of the smallest populations in the world, accounts for over 20 per cent of world grain trade — 20 per cent. And we're up against countries that have got millions and millions and millions of people who put their dollars into the treasury in the form of a value added tax in Europe to help fight the subsidy war. So they support their farmers in Europe. Value added tax, the VAT tax, very similar to a GST (goods and services tax) or a PST (provincial sales tax) — a value added tax.

Consumers pay it, Mr. Speaker. Consumers pay it all over Europe. And Europe has managed to take itself from a position after the war, of being a country that could . . . or being an area that could not feed itself, to becoming an area that has gone into the export business. And they've done it with those types of taxes. The value added tax is a fair tax because everybody pays it, everybody pays it.

And in Saskatchewan it's even fairer because it's discretionary, Mr. Speaker. We tax restaurant meals, but we don't tax food. I stopped in a bakery in Wadena this morning, talked to my friend, Mr. Suik, and I said, well how's business going since the PST came in? Well he

said, you know, it's not bad; he said people come in and instead of buying one or two doughnuts or three, they'll buy a half dozen. It may have even helped business, I'm not sure, he said; but no, there's no real complaints about it. Because we don't tax basic groceries, Mr. Speaker. We tax discretionary items like restaurant meals.

In the budget, Mr. Speaker, we also take into account that many people in Saskatchewan may be of lower income, and even with the family income plans and all the other support things that are in the Department of Social Services, it may be an unfair imposition to tax children's clothing, children's necessities, diapers, those sorts of things, Mr. Speaker.

And so the minister in his budget put forward a \$200 per child tax credit. On a family of four — mom, dad, and two kids — that's \$400, \$400. Well, Mr. Speaker, at 7 per cent, \$400 should cover off \$6,000 worth of purchases. And I don't know any baby in Saskatchewan that can go through \$6,000 worth of diapers. It's pretty tough, it's pretty tough.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this budget has been fair, has been open, has been honest, and has been compassionate, because it does provide the offset and the relief that is needed for people of lower income so that their children don't suffer, so that their children don't suffer.

There's nothing wrong with that, Mr. Speaker. I agree with that type of thing. I'm a compassionate person. The members opposite laugh. I guess you'll have to ask my neighbours, ask my friends. I'll take my chances on having a bolt of lightning strike me but, Mr. Speaker, we are compassionate people on this side of the House. Members opposite are going to disagree of course; they disagree with everything that we say, but we back our words up with actions. We don't just have empty rhetoric.

We don't impose death taxes on widows and orphans. Members opposite did that, and they claim to be compassionate. They claim to be compassionate. Now, I can't believe, Mr. Speaker, that that is the case. Succession duties, death taxes are compassionate? Mr. Speaker, I really can't believe that members opposite are going to go back to those kinds of ideas, but I hear that they are. I hear that's part of their platform. They're talking about it out on the street. Maybe they do have a plan after all — maybe they do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I probably could go on for several hours today. And I know members opposite have been listening attentively because they have been rather quiet today, and I thank them for that. It's a rare opportunity to have that happen in this House. And so, Mr. Speaker, I will only end by saying that I support this budget 100 per cent. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's once again an honour to take part in this debate on the budget. This is the fifth occasion since being elected in 1986 that I've had the privilege to represent the people of Saskatoon Nutana.

And while I sat listening to the Minister of Finance on Monday night, I couldn't help but recall that I had heard much of what he had to say on the evening of February 20, 1991 when I was listening to the news. And that was the occasion that he told the public that there were going to be small increases for the Department of Health, small increases for the Department of Education, and that the government was going to introduce a provincial goods and services tax to pay for the province's share of GRIP (gross revenue insurance plan) and NISA (net income stabilization account).

And the minister on that evening basically said, the evening of February 20, that people living in urban communities in Saskatchewan were going to have to pay their fair share. And I thought, this can't be, this is outrageous. This government has finally gone too far in terms of trying to drive the wedge between urban and rural people.

(1515)

That decision on February 20, 1991 to introduce a provincial goods and services tax and link it to urban Saskatchewan was a most cynical move, a cynical move on the part of the government to get themselves re-elected in rural Saskatchewan.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, while the Berlin Wall has come down between the two Germanys, this government continues to try and put up walls between rural and urban citizens living in Saskatchewan. The government wants to drive the wedge even further between urban citizens and rural citizens so that they can be successful electorally.

Well I want to tell the members opposite that this is simply not possible. The people of this province know that in order to make progress in the province of Saskatchewan, to come to terms with our very real problems, urban and rural citizens are going to have to work co-operatively. They're going to have to work together regardless of where they live in order to better the lot of all of us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this province faces some very serious challenges. We have a provincial government debt that is well in excess of \$5 billion. We have an agricultural industry which is on the verge of collapse. We have young people who see no future in Saskatchewan and are leaving Saskatchewan in record numbers. We are seeing lay-offs in the private and public sector. We're seeing that housing starts in our province are down. Bankruptcies, both personal and business and farm, are evident everywhere. We're seeing rural school closures, and on it goes.

What the citizens of our province wanted in this budget was some hope. They wanted some hope. They wanted the government to boost their spirits. And this budget offered no hope and it did little to boost the spirits of Saskatchewan citizens. Instead, Mr. Speaker, what this budget offered was tax increases, more job lay-offs, more program cuts, and of course more debt.

And I want to review for a minute the government's

record on taxes. I recall as the candidate running in the 1982 election campaign, the Conservative Party promised to cover . . . or to cut personal taxes by 10 per cent. They promised to eliminate the gas tax and they promised to reduce the sales tax. In fact they promised to eliminate the sales tax.

But what have they done? Did they lower personal income taxes by one dollar? No. In fact they introduced the flat tax which is now in excess of 2 per cent of net income. Did they promise or did they eliminate the sales tax? Not only did they increase it from 5 to 7 per cent, but they have announced that they intend to extend this tax to every good and service in the province of Saskatchewan that's now covered by the federal goods and services tax.

And did they eliminate the gas tax? Well first they did, and then they didn't, and then they did. Now my question to the members opposite is, who are the flip-flopers in the province of Saskatchewan? This government flip-flops on taxes.

And then of course there was the tax on used cars, and then there wasn't, and now it looks as though there will be. Another flip-flop on the part of the members opposite. And then of course who could forget the tax on lottery tickets. First they put it on and then they took it off, and now they're putting it back on, and another flip-flop on the part of members opposite.

And then they threatened a tax on food but instead gave us the provincial goods and services tax, the biggest tax increase in the history of Saskatchewan.

The irony in all of this is — the PC government's record on taxation — is that they're planning to get \$167 million more from the sales tax this year, but they will get 48 million less from oil royalties according to the budget book that was presented on Monday evening.

This government's record on taxation has been one of unfairness. They've not had a taxation policy based on the ability to pay. No, Mr. Speaker, this government has given tax breaks to the multinationals and the big corporate business friends of the members opposite, and at the same time they've increased individual taxes onto the individual taxpayer by horrendous amounts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the issue of the deficit. This latest budget introduced by the Conservatives is the 10th straight deficit budget. The province's cumulative government debt is now \$5 billion, and that's just what we know of. What we have said, Mr. Speaker, is that we want to open the books to find out where this province is really at in terms of government debt.

Now just the annual interest charges alone are \$500 million per annum. Mr. Speaker, that means that every man, woman, and child, based on 1 million citizens, pays \$500 per year just to service the debt. Next to the budget for the Department of Health and Education, this interest on the debt is the third largest expenditure in the budget. And what is so saddening is that the debt didn't need to get this high. The government had the choice to be fiscally responsible or they had the choice to be wasters

and mismanagers and they chose the latter. They chose Joytec and GigaText; they chose Supercart and Cargill. They chose government advertising and Weyerhaeuser. They chose waste and mismanagement over people. But it is the people not their big corporate business friends who are now being asked to pay for their irresponsible government.

What we need in this province, Mr. Speaker, is a government that will be fair when it comes to coming to terms with the debt. What the people want is a government that will have a revenue policy based on fairness.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about the government's record on education. On Monday evening the Minister of Finance, who has been the minister of Education said, and I quote:

... education makes the difference in the ability of individuals and communities to compete in our rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. It enhances our quality of life by opening doors to better job opportunities and increases our understanding of the world around us.

However, (Mr. Speaker) as is the case in health, those involved in the delivery of education services must seek greater efficiencies.

According to the Minister of Finance. Well that's it. That's the Minister of Finance's comments on education. On the one hand the government indicates education makes a difference in our ability to compete and then they tell us we must seek greater efficiencies while they continue their policy of underfunding in the area of education.

Last year the Department of Education and schools in this province received a 3 per cent increase. The school system in response laid off teachers, increased class size, closed schools, and trimmed programs, and increased property taxes. And school boards told the province and told the Minister of Education and told the government that a 3 per cent increase simply wasn't enough.

This year the government has increased grants to school boards by \$13 million or 3.5 per cent, and cut the educational development fund by half. Well, members opposite, 3.5 per cent increase won't keep pace with inflation let alone all of the increases that have come about because of the federal goods and services tax, the provincial goods and services tax, a 24 per cent increase in unemployment insurance premiums, core curriculum implementation, and collective agreements with the teaching staff in this province and the support staff.

In response to the government's budget in education, school boards, particularly those in rural Saskatchewan, whom have been hardest hit by the cut-backs in education, have cut teachers, they've cut support positions, they are closing schools, they've cut programs, and they are increasing local property taxes.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, rural school boards only received a .8 per cent increase and consequently school boards are laying off teachers and support staff in rural

Saskatchewan, closing schools in rural Saskatchewan, and increasing property taxes in rural Saskatchewan.

Government underfunding in education has meant lost jobs in rural communities, school closures, and tax increases. So much for repopulating rural Saskatchewan.

This government talks about decentralization of government services out of Regina and into rural communities. At the same time close to 400 citizens living in rural communities may lose their jobs because of this government's underfunding in education.

I want to speak for a moment on the government's decision to close the school for the deaf. We have long held the view that in order for special-needs students to have the very best education available to them, that they must have a variety of options, a variety of education options available. Closure of the school for the deaf, Mr. Speaker, will mean that deaf students in this province will not have access to a school similar to the school for the deaf.

What it means is that that particular educational option is no longer available, and while there are many people in Saskatchewan that support mainstreaming of special-needs children and mainstreaming is most appropriate for special-needs children, there are some special-needs students who are not able to fit into the mainstream of our education system and they require a different option. And I find it regrettable that the Government of Saskatchewan decided to close the school for the deaf, lay off people who have worked there, many of them for up to 20, 25, 30 years, and then send those kids elsewhere. That's regrettable.

The staff at the school for the deaf are committed professionals. Many of those people have been there for 20 . . . in excess of 20 years. Those people view the children at the school for the deaf as their family and they're very, very worried about the future of those young people. And unfortunately the Government of Saskatchewan did not involve the staff in the planning for those kids — did not listen to the staff about some other options. And the deaf community in this province is taking the government to court to try and get this government to stop the school closure because they're worried about the future of those young people.

The kids are committed to each other. Many of those kids have only known that school as their only home. Many of those kids have only lived at the school for the deaf during the vast part of their lives and go back to their own communities during the summer holidays. That is their home. That is their home. And I find it regrettable that the government didn't look at other options.

It is recognized that the building may no longer be appropriate. It may be too big. But there are some other buildings, some other spaces in the city of Saskatoon that could have been used for a much smaller program, and the government didn't look at those options.

The other regrettable thing, Mr. Speaker, is that the government did not look at involving the deaf community in finding new ways to deliver education. They did not

examine the educational program that was at the school to find out whether it was appropriate. And I feel that the government really should have followed the Ontario government's model of examining deaf education by looking at deaf education in mainstream schools and deaf education in the school for the deaf in order to best determine what would be an appropriate model or models of education.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to review for another moment the K to 12 education funding. If you look at the operating grants and the educational development fund combined, education, K to 12 education only received a 1.51 per cent increase. And consequently that's why you're seeing job lay-offs, that's why you're seeing school closures, and that's why you're seeing property tax increases.

The government's record on education has not been good. And if you look at the government's record, spending record on education, you will note that the spending by school boards on education has increased throughout the 1980s, but in constant dollars per students, spending increased an average rate of 4.1 per cent from 1980 to 1985 and 3 per cent from 1985 to 1988.

We are presently, Mr. Speaker, in the process, I am presently in the process of trying to determine what this budget means in terms of constant dollars. But if you look at the government's record, up until 1985 their spending on education kept pace with inflation. But since 1986, since this government was re-elected in 1986, the spending per student has in fact decreased based on 1981 dollars.

(1530)

And I'll give you an example. In 1981-1982, total grants to school boards amounted to \$269,092,164. If you base that on a per capita or per student grant, that amounted to \$1,349.19. Now if you take the increased funding for each of the other years up until 1990-91, grants per student in 1981 dollars are in fact \$1,398.91. And if you put this year's spending, '91-92 spending on education into the mix, we are below where we were at in 1981.

And so real spending on education has decreased under this Conservative government. And that's why we have rural school closures. That's why we have teacher lay-offs and that's why we have tax increases.

Now if you look at the Langlois-Scharfe report on school governance you will find that in fact Saskatchewan, if you look at Saskatchewan in comparison to other jurisdictions across the country, we rank second in terms of property taxes. In Prince Edward Island the gross property tax per capita is \$114.73. In Saskatchewan we spend on average \$802.56. The only province that spends more per capita on property taxes is the government or is the people of Ontario.

Now, Mr. Speaker, five years ago we were ranked fifth. We were fifth in the country when it came to property taxes. But under the Government of Saskatchewan we have seen a steady down-loading of responsibility for educational funding onto local jurisdictions. And as a

result of that, we have moved from fifth rank in Canada to number two rank. And we think, Mr. Speaker, it's time the Government of Saskatchewan started adequately funding the K to 12 system in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I noted that the Minister of Education in question period today talked about all of the capital projects that have been undertaken by the Government of Saskatchewan during your years in office. And I just want to remind the Minister of Education that there are many, many new schools that have been built under the Conservative government that are on the verge of closing.

And one example is St. Gregor right outside of Humboldt. St. Gregor School is basically a brand-new school, and the Humboldt School Board is on the verge of closing that school.

We have another school in the P.A. (Prince Albert) Rural School Division called Paddockwood. And the people in Paddockwood, because of declining enrolments, are concerned that their school too shall close. And on and on it goes.

I have written the Minister of Education to tell me what schools have been built in this province under your government, and I have asked the Minister of Education to tell me what schools are now scheduled for closure. I made that request some months ago, and the Minister of Education has not bothered to respond.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have in Saskatchewan is a situation where in 1980 about 56.7 per cent of funding for education came from the province of Saskatchewan. In 1991-92 less than 48 per cent of the funding comes from the province of Saskatchewan. We are seeing increasing pressure on local property taxpayers to pay for education.

And I acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that rural depopulation has contributed to the problems that rural Saskatchewan is facing in terms of grants from the province, because grants are based on per capita students. I acknowledge that. However when people decide to leave a community or communities, 30 people don't leave the same school. They will leave different areas in a rural community. School boards are still obligated by statute to provide an education for those students.

And it seems to me that we have known for some time, we have known for some time that the trend in rural Saskatchewan has been one of student loss — student population loss. And if we look at the numbers of school enrolment, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, we have gone from 94,179 students in 1980-81 to 1990-91, 84,101. We've lost 10,000 students in rural Saskatchewan alone. That's not including the towns and villages. That's just rural Saskatchewan.

Well it seems to me there should have been some planning done on the part of the government to ensure that schools in rural communities have access to funding. And as we've seen in this budget, there has been a .8 of 1 per cent increase in funding to education and it's simply unacceptable.

It seems to me what the Government of Saskatchewan

must do is to start providing some leadership in the area of education and figure out how it is that we are going to provide an education to students living in rural Saskatchewan, because school boards are finding it increasingly difficult because of government underfunding in education.

Now I just wanted to talk for a moment on the student aid fund that was cut by 12.7 per cent. We will all have heard by now that the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan are planning on increasing tuition fees by some 17 per cent. In some colleges it will be much higher than that, particularly in the professional colleges. At the same time the Government of Saskatchewan has just cut the student aid fund by some 12.7 per cent. Millions of dollars have been cut from the budget when it comes to student aid.

Now how on earth do we expect our students, who are finding it very difficult to get into these colleges anyway because of enrolment quotas which have been brought in by the universities because of government underfunding, but how do we expect these students to continue to pay tuition fee increases, continue to pay increases in the cost of living, and at the same time cut back the funds that are available to them through student aid.

Now we have to remember, we have to remember that a loan is a loan. Students will pay it back. What we're finding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that students in this province are taking out larger and larger student loans and some students are leaving owing the Government of Saskatchewan \$45,000 in student loans. Well in my day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what it cost to buy a house. We have students that are leaving owing as much money as it would cost to buy a house, and that's because the cost of education is becoming more and more expensive.

And it seems to me that if we don't want to limit the access of the university to only those students that come from privileged or money backgrounds, then we must have increases in student loans available to students, and we must bring back bursaries, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the bursary system has been done in under the leadership of the members opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a minute on health care. I find it ironic that in the city of Saskatoon, the city that I represent, we have had a new addition to University Hospital, we've had a new addition to St. Paul's Hospital, and we are in the process of building the new City Hospital.

Now the Government of Saskatchewan decided to bring in a fellow by the name of Atkinson who wrote the Atkinson report on hospitals in Saskatoon. What the Government of Saskatchewan did was set up the Saskatoon hospital authority. And the role of the authority was to try and co-ordinate services in our various hospitals so that the hospitals would not be duplicating service. And that committee or that authority is in the process of trying to sort out what medical services will go into what hospitals.

But before they had the opportunity to go through that process, the Government of Saskatchewan brought down

its edict on February 20 that hospital funding was going to be limited this year, that hospital funding was not going to meet the rate of inflation.

And how have the hospitals responded? They have closed beds, they have laid off staff, and they have closed operating rooms. That's how the hospitals in my city have responded. This government did not give the hospital authority, whom it set up, the opportunity to go through the process of trying to sort out who was going to go where.

And in fact at St. Paul's Hospital we had an extension, I believe, of 54 beds. Last fall they closed 41 beds. That gave us 13 additional beds. And now because of this government's underfunding they have closed more than 13 beds. And so really we have spent millions of dollars in a hospital expansion at St. Paul's Hospital that is not in essence open because this government has closed more beds than it built.

Now it seems to me that if you're going to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in edifices to yourself, then you've got to put the money in place to pay for the operating costs of those facilities.

But this government hasn't done that. We have a lovely new building at St. Paul's, we have a lovely new facility at University Hospital, we have a brand-new building in the form of City Hospital, but we don't have the money available to run them.

And so my question is, what sort of planning is going on on the part of the provincial government? We have new schools in this province that are being closed and we have new hospitals in this province that in essence are being closed. We've spent hundreds of millions of dollars which contributes to the long-term debt of this province, and these facilities are in essence not available to the people that they're supposed to serve because the Government of Saskatchewan has chosen not to put the operating funds in place.

And I think it's time that we returned to the people of this province some form of fiscal responsibility on the part of government. We can no longer expend huge sums of funding onto capital expenditures and then not have the necessary operating funds to run those facilities.

Another case in point is the agricultural building on the University of Saskatchewan campus. Now while the Government of Saskatchewan likes to comment upon the new agricultural building — and it is a beautiful building and it is a facility that is obviously needed and has been wanted for some time — the question becomes, will this facility open? The president of the University of Saskatchewan has asked that the government pay for the increase in operating costs, and the Premier has indicated that that has to come out of the university's budget.

Now the question is, what did the Premier promise? The Premier promised the university that those increases in operating funds would be available, and they haven't been made available to the University of Saskatchewan. So the question becomes, will the building open? And it's interesting. As I understand it, the College of Agriculture

is the only college on campus where you can still have a 65 per cent average and get into the college. They have not had to bring in enrolment quotas, and I suspect that's because of the farm crisis that's presently facing rural Saskatchewan.

But certainly all the other colleges, you have to have high averages in order to get into university. For instance, the College of Education, in order to go into the elementary school program, you require a 78 per cent average, and I believe the secondary school program you require an 82 per cent average.

Well there's a whole lot of kids that are being left out of the university and their access to that college, who in years past would have had the average to get into that program but are being denied the opportunity to become teachers because of this government's underfunding in education. And I in fact, Mr. Speaker, find that incredible.

Now I know that some of my other colleagues want to get into the debate on the budget, so I want to tell the members opposite that what the people of this province want is hope. They wanted a budget that would give them hope. This budget offered no hope to the people.

It offered tax increases. It offered job lay-offs. It offered program cuts. It offered devastation, and this is not the time to put devastation onto people in this province. People want some hope. They want some vision. They want some new leadership. And I really think the people were hoping that we would have an election this spring and not a budget. I will not be supporting this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — I will not be supporting this budget because this budget fails to offer the people of this province hope, and that's really what they want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm a little disappointed in the remarks of the hon. member who just took her seat. She obviously hasn't read the budget document, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when she talked about hope and vision, because that's precisely what this budget document did do, was lay out a plan for the people of Saskatchewan.

And I know that that fact that a plan was laid out causes some discomfort in the members opposite because the spelling of the word "plan" may be causing them some problems. We know that one of the issues rapidly developing in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that the New Democratic Party opposite doesn't have a plan for the future of this province, doesn't have an idea as to the direction this province should take. Mr. Speaker, they keep saying, well wait until the election, we'll have a plan; wait until the election, we'll have a plan. Well the public are also making it abundantly clear, Mr. Speaker, that they don't like that type of cynicism, that an opposition party's afraid to put out any suggestions that it may have because, oh, somebody may take them.

I will give you the assurance, the hon. members opposite, from some of the comments I've heard and from some of the proposals put forward by members opposite, I can give them the assurance on behalf of the government that we won't take one of them. We won't steal one of the suggestions. We won't, Mr. Speaker, we won't touch one of them with a 10-foot pole.

When I look at suggestions like a government Crown corporation to do all the building, as the member from Regina Rosemont suggests, I can tell you that it would never be a policy or plan of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, what I said, you don't have a plan and that is not inconsistent.

I said that there are some goofy suggestions and I said there's some goofy ideas and there's some goofy proposals floating around out there, but I said you don't have a plan because, Mr. Speaker, you couldn't find anybody in this province with the thinking that could put the collection of idiot ideas that are coming about over there together into a comprehensive plan. And that's one of the difficulties that members opposite have.

One of the other disappointing points, Mr. Speaker, of the members opposite, to date not one of them has talked about the economic difficulties in the province of Saskatchewan and the interdependence of rural and urban Saskatchewan — not one of them, Mr. Speaker. And the reason is because all the politics, of course, is the government is driving a wedge between rural and urban. I think I can document a case, Mr. Speaker, that the wedge very much is part of the policies of the members opposite who — and I think the case is demonstrably obvious — have written off rural Saskatchewan.

And let's take a look. Let's take a look. Mr. Speaker, I talked about the interdependence. And the hon. members don't even follow, Mr. Speaker, and I note the Sherwood Co-op. And this was an important notice in yesterday's *Leader-Post*, and it deals with the Sherwood Co-op here in Regina, and it talks about a notice to the members of the Sherwood Co-op. And it goes on, and they talk about the difficulties that the Sherwood Co-op has had in Regina, the difficulties faced in the early '80s.

There's little doubt that our future success (and this is the Sherwood Co-op) will be aligned to two fundamental factors. In the first instance, as an economy possessing a strong agricultural base, our success will be influenced by a healthy farm economy.

And then of course they talk about the need for their members to purchase goods and services from them.

So here we have, I believe, the largest co-operative in the province of Saskatchewan outside of the Wheat Pool, retail co-operatives, making it clear in the largest city in this province, or the capital city of this province, that they depend for their future on a strong agricultural economy. Exactly what the Premier and this government have been saying, Mr. Speaker, for a long time, that urban Saskatchewan depends vitally on rural Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan goes as rural Saskatchewan goes and as agriculture goes.

So, Mr. Speaker, to deal with that and the agricultural difficulties, through the leadership of the Premier, our government, Mr. Speaker, led the way in developing long-term agricultural stability programs, the GRIP program and the NISA program.

And, Mr. Speaker, we stabilized and built a new infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan, when I talked about individual line service and rural natural gas and new nursing homes and new hospitals outside the major centres. And, Mr. Speaker, we try and involve rural Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan people in the future of their own communities with community development bonds, a new debt instrument, Mr. Speaker, a new instrument to create stability, opportunity, and hope in Saskatchewan.

And I look at the number of small businesses that we put outside this province, and I think of the criticism of members opposite, criticism that Gainers goes into North Battleford, that Phillips multinational goes into Moose Jaw, and I could go on and on and on of the industries that are going out to rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, as part of that plan for stabilizing Saskatchewan, I look at the commitment of this government to the processing of Saskatchewan's natural resources right here in Saskatchewan. We now process our oil here in Saskatchewan into fuels. We now process our forests into pulp and fine paper.

Mr. Speaker, these are all part of that strategy and vision of this government to bring stability to this province, to give them the opportunity to grow and development, recognizing that it will be a partnership, Mr. Speaker, of the people of this province, the businesses of this province and the government of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — And I have to contrast, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the stated policies of the members opposite and their track record. And let me run through because some of the hon. members have obviously forgotten.

Was it, Mr. Speaker, a Conservative government or a New Democratic government that put a moratorium on nursing homes in this province? It was an NDP government that put a moratorium on nursing homes, nursing homes which helped stabilize many communities, Mr. Speaker.

Was it a Conservative government or a New Democratic Party which said, no more hospitals. No, it was the leader of the New Democratic Party that said, no more hospital institutions should be built. Will that help rural Saskatchewan? Not in the least.

Is it, Mr. Speaker, a Conservative government that is opposed to decentralization? Not in the least. It's the New Democratic Party that's opposed to decentralization to try and help restore and stabilize and give hope and

opportunity for rural Saskatchewan.

Is it, Mr. Speaker, a Conservative government that said to the people out there, no you can't participate, you can't have community development bonds. No, it was a New Democratic Party, for nearly 20 years in office, refused to give the people in rural Saskatchewan or anywhere in Saskatchewan the opportunity to invest in their own province. Mr. Speaker, it is this government that brought in community development bonds to give hope and opportunity for much of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, was it the Conservatives that said no small industries? No, it was the New Democratic Party. Let me give you the example, Mr. Speaker, of how the New Democratic Party thought with its central planning, government knew best approach to economic development. And it epitomizes all the wrong-headed thinking that you could possibly find, and I'm referring to a company called Nabu.

Now Nabu was an investment by the New Democratic government of the day into telecommunications, Mr. Speaker. This was supposed to be their foray into high tech. High tech for the New Democratic Party up to that point had been ox carts, Mr. Speaker. But no, they were taking a quantum leap in intellectual assessment of economic development, and they came up with a company called Nabu.

Thirteen million dollars in today's dollars that they lost in this fly-by-night operation, Mr. Speaker. But you know what was doubly wrong about that investment, which was appallingly wrong and tells you how wrong-headed they were, Nabu wasn't even a Saskatchewan company. It was a company down in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. It was in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

Now what happened is a whole bunch of these central thinkers on their weekly excursion down to Ottawa probably read something. It only had four letters. Maybe we should invest in it — we can spell it. Let's buy shares in this. And now we've got these moneys from the Heritage Fund and so let's go and get some of that, and we'll be high technicians here. We'll be at the forefront.

So here they are, Mr. Speaker. They don't help the small industry in Saskatchewan get started; they bought some. But where do they go for their high-tech investment? They go outside the province, put some jobs temporarily in Ottawa, end up losing their shirt, costing the people of Saskatchewan \$13 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to take a look at their track record. And we have to take a look at their track record and there are some very, very interesting facts. There was not one paper mill built by a New Democratic government in the province, in the history of this province. There was not one pulp mill built by a New Democratic government or a CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government in the history of this province.

Interestingly enough, there was not one new potash mine built by the New Democratic party or the CCF Party. Now they did, Mr. Speaker, again in the central planning

wisdom, decide to expand the potash mine at Lanigan which was one of the great boondoggles of all time.

They did not build, the New Democratic party did not build one upgrader; in all the years CCF-NDP, they never built one, never were prepared to process the oil that was in Saskatchewan, never had a commitment to recognizing that there is some benefit to the people of Saskatchewan in processing the resources here. The logic is always escaped me as to why that would not have been a natural thought of any political party of any stripe in this province. Never, in all the years CCF-NDP, never built one fertilizer plant, Mr. Speaker, not one.

So having said all of that, Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that they're opposed to nursing home development with a moratorium. They have said publicly, no more hospital institutions. They have fought decentralization. They are opposed to the community development bonds. Their small industry development was based on sending some money down to Ottawa in a fly-by-night operation, \$13 million. They were totally against processing the natural resources here in the province. They never developed the natural gas industry in this province, refused to consider rural natural gas helping the infrastructure, refused to build individual line service, and now they say they are opposed to GRIP and NISA, the farm stabilization.

And they try and say — and they're critical — that there's no plan for hope. Where was the plan for hope from the New Democratic Party? It was never there. It was not there when they were in opposition from '82 until '86. It is not there today, Mr. Speaker. And the track record shows it won't be there tomorrow; it won't be there at election time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — And when they lose, it won't be there the day after, and it won't be there five years down the road or ten years down the road, Mr. Speaker, because the track record and the evidence is overwhelming that the NDP never had a plan to develop and stabilize Saskatchewan and never will have one, Mr. Speaker.

(1600)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member that preceded me in the debate said that she is concerned about the credibility. For the first time, Mr. Speaker, we are going to get a list in this Assembly of the number of flip-flops in position of the New Democratic Party in the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker. I think it's worthy of note, I think it's worthy to be read into the record, and I certainly believe that it's worthy for the people of this Saskatchewan to be aware of some of their positions.

I might indicate . . . because I saw some confusion over there when I went through the list, Mr. Speaker, of what the NDP had done. Some members of the New Democratic opposition said, gee I didn't know we said building no more hospitals; boy, I didn't realize that we'd said that. Where did that come from?

Well that came from a hospital products and technology conference, August-September of 1985 and the quote is, "building more hospitals is not the answer".

And that came from the now Leader of the New Democratic Party, the Leader of the Opposition opposite, Mr. Speaker. If you want to know where it is, it's public record, public record, Mr. Speaker.

The first issue I'd like to talk about is the NDP talk about deficit reduction. And if the public gets confused as to their plan, I think they will understand why, because they have a many-headed monster before them in terms of what their position will ultimately be. They're going to need the election campaign. I can see what happened, they say they got a plan at election. I can see what'll happen. They'll drop a couple of suggestions down, they'll catch 90 per cent of their candidates by surprise, half of the 90 per cent will be disagreeing publicly with what is said. And they're going to spend all through the campaign saying, oh you didn't give us a chance, you're not giving us a chance, you're not giving us a chance. I can see it all now, Mr. Speaker, exactly what happened in the last federal election. Exactly what happened in the last federal election.

Well first of all, the Leader of the Opposition said he's going to eliminate the deficit in 15 years. And then a couple of days later . . . I'm sorry, February of 1991 he's going to do it in 15 years. March 8, 1990, said he was going to eliminate the \$12 billion deficit in 15 years. Then he goes up to the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention and he said he'd do a \$4 billion deficit over 15 years. Then he goes to the chamber of commerce, said that he'll eliminate the deficit in 15 to 20 years. And then he goes in Saskatoon to the *Star-Phoenix* and said: I don't think I said that ever.

Well the funny part was, Mr. Speaker, and what is a bit tragic about the New Democratic various positions on deficit, is that they will go to some meetings, Mr. Speaker, and they'll say the deficit's the problem and that they're going to try and eliminate it over 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 . . . I mean, let's put off the election for a couple of months and get it up to 50 years. Give you more time to put out some figures.

As recently as this session, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition went before the cameras and said, as it applies to SaskEnergy, they should increase their debt, increase their debt to pay for pipeline expansion. On the one hand he says he's going to reduce it; and then he comes in here and says, oh no, increase the deficit — increase the deficit by \$250 million to pay for pipeline expansion.

No wonder, Mr. Speaker, the NDP don't want to talk about what they would do. I could go on — and the quotes are just about a campaign in themselves — about their position on the deficit. And the number of years talked about are also very inconsistent.

Now let me talk about another inconsistency. Well when the GRIP program came out and the NISA program came out, I've got a quote from the *Fort Qu'Appelle Times* and the *Waterfront Press* from the New Democratic Party

candidate in Qu'Appelle-Lumsden, saying how much the NDP . . . and she says we welcome GRIP and NISA. We welcome GRIP and NISA. At least it does get away from the **ad hoc** pay-outs which come later than hoped for. So that's what they said. That's what they said publicly. And I'm sure we've got candidates, New Democratic Party candidates all over the place, that said exactly the same thing.

What happens in the session? What happens in the session? The Leader of the Opposition comes up and says we're going to scrap the GRIP and NISA and we're going to renegotiate GRIP and NISA. He's going to scrap it, throw it out. On the one hand they say they wanted it and welcome it, and a month later they say they're going to scrap it and renegotiate it.

Talk about flip-flops, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is two. The first one is their inconsistencies, fundamental inconsistencies on the deficit, and now their fundamental inconsistent position on the farm safety net programs.

So then, Mr. Speaker, they called for a moratorium on farm debt. And that's what they said. They've gone around and said we've got to have a moratorium on farm debt. The credit unions would be protected, which is an interesting comment in itself, because they hold much of the debt out there. So if you're only going to put it on the banks, I think you should say so. Or if you're going to put it, and you're going to give the money back, you should say that because one's another expenditure that we're going to have to add to the list. But a very inconsistent position.

Then what happens during the budget debate. The Leader of the Opposition then gets up and says, our idea of a moratorium won't work anyway. And those are not my words. Those are not my words, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So on the one hand they call for a moratorium, then they say it won't work anyway. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the third fundamental inconsistency and flip-flop that I've named today.

So then, Mr. Speaker, we have the call from the member from Prince Albert, who stood up and called in the city of Prince Albert and across this province for a revival of the land bank. He wants the land bank brought back. And he said that on March 19, 1990. And the farmers heard it across the province. Bring back the land bank, says the NDP member from Prince Albert. But what in 1990 did the Leader of the Opposition say? At a meeting of farm women in Fillmore he said the land bank was a failure and wouldn't be repeated. Who do you believe from the New Democratic Party? They've got two positions on the land bank — for it and against it. There's not many other positions they can take, Mr. Speaker. They've got it covered. So now that's four contradictions and flip-flops, Mr. Speaker.

So then we've heard for a number of years a very heavy dedicated political attack on the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill. They were against it, and the paper mill they were against it — they said so in this House — we shouldn't have built it. They attacked the Weyerhaeuser family personally in this House. And now what happens, Mr. Speaker. Now what happens after attacking it and saying they didn't

want it. One of the NDP members of Prince Albert says, well it's not an issue in Prince Albert any more. I guess it's okay. I guess we'll keep it. We won't tear it down. So that's now five, Mr. Speaker. That is five flip-flops — the deficit, the farm safety net programs, the moratoriums, land bank, Weyerhaeuser.

And let's go to Saferco, let's go to Saferco. They've attacked Saferco, the fertilizer plant, day after day after day in this Assembly and in most parts of the province. They're opposed to processing natural gas here to make fertilizer. Saskatchewan has more farm land than any other jurisdiction in Canada. We should have been the first jurisdiction, first province to have a fertilizer plant, not the last. It's being built, Mr. Speaker, over the objections of the New Democratic Party who have said they are opposed to it, opposed to dealing with Cargill.

But oh no, very recently they go and talk . . . November of 1990, one of the members from Moose Jaw — fortunately he's here and knows of what I speak. I'm not getting a lot of concern; kind of likes the deal now as a matter of fact. So now at least some of them are in favour of the Saferco deal, Mr. Speaker. At the same time others are going out attacking it, saying they would scrap it. So now that is number six. That is six flip-flops.

Let's go to number seven. We can talk about . . . Oh I've got a long list, Harry; don't give up on me yet, please. Harry, I have such a long list; it took me so long to prepare these lists of flip-flops, I've got to give them. I've got to give them on the record. I know the public are interested.

And we look at Gainers. Now, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House have sat through some pretty vicious debates, very strong debates, about how bad Gainers is in the city of North Battleford. And now, contrary to what *Hansard* says, the member from The Battlefords now says on November 1, 1990, NDP member says, I've never been critical of Gainers, he said — never been critical of Gainers, he said. Fought it in the last election; opposed it in this House; goes to Prince Albert and said, well Gainers is all right. That's another. That's number seven, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the GST and the E&H (education and health) tax harmonization. And let me quote, let me quote. We had the statement in this House by the Finance critic, the hand-picked Finance critic of the New Democratic Party, personally chosen, hand-picked Finance critic — recently yanked Finance critic in the budget debate — but hand-picked spokesman on financial matters for the New Democratic Party. They chose the most knowledgeable person over there to deal with Finance, and the one who understood financial matters. And that's what the leader said.

Well let me quote the Leader of the New Democratic Party in an NDP news release on October 3, 1990, and it goes on: the fairest and most sensible way to proceed would be to harmonize the two sales taxes. That's what the New Democratic Party leader says, the Leader of the Opposition said on October 3, 1990. In this House the hand-picked Finance critic says, if there's got to be two taxes, they should be harmonized. That's what they said.

And that's what they had said consistently for nearly two years, Mr. Speaker. Today they stand up and say, oh no, we may have said that we were in favour of harmonization, but somewhere we changed our mind. We're not sure. It depended who we talked to last, and today now we're going to try and convince the people of Saskatchewan that we've changed our mind. We're opposed to harmonization because we're going to fight this to the death, they said.

They're going to delay the House, stall the House, whatever they're going to do. It's the mother of all battles, I think they've called it on harmonization. When in fact, Mr. Speaker, on public record on numerous occasions, the New Democratic Party had said they favour harmonization of the provincial sales tax and the federal goods and services tax, Mr. Speaker. That's number 8.

I talked about the deficit. I talked about the deficit and the New Democratic Party's position of . . . now it says increase the deficit of SaskEnergy. And I'll quote what the Leader of the Opposition said.

More debt would be one way . . . Sees no problem with the Crown corporation going into further debt to finance pipeline expansion.

(1615)

Then, Mr. Speaker, how do some of their key supporters, the trade union movement, get any sense, Mr. Speaker, of what the New Democratic policies are, because out in rural Saskatchewan the Leader of the New Democratic Party says labour's going to have to pay for that debt and that deficit. And that's what the farmers were told publicly. Publicly, they were told. But oh no, at the federation of labour convention, the Leader of the Opposition changes his mind and says: oh no, not labour, not you guys. Labour doesn't have to pay for it. I was wrong in Harris. I've changed my mind. I've changed my mind, says the Leader of Opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to quote because the hon. member from Moose Jaw didn't hear it: we've got to sacrifice and that means business and that means labour, and that's what he said about paying the deficit. Then the headline — I won't use it — labour makes NDP leader back down. Another flip-flop, Mr. Speaker, that is number 10.

And then we go to the question of trade offices. Do the NDP favour trade offices or don't they favour trade offices? The NDP candidate in Indian Head-Wolseley said he would shut down the trade offices; that's the NDP policy. Now the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the New Democratic Party says now he's not so sure; he'd have to take a look at them. Changed his mind; flip-flopped on the policy.

Mr. Speaker, we talked . . . the NDP have said, oh there would be no more political appointments because the Tories use political appointments; the NDP won't have political appointments. But I urge all hon. members to take a look at the *Leader-Post* of March 1 where the leader says, won't rule out appointments, that he won't rule out appointing former NDP MLAs to government agencies,

boards, and commissions if his party forms the next government.

That's what the policy is of March 1, which is completely contradictory to the long-standing policy of what's been stated in this House and around the province from time to time. That's number 12, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 12 changes, inconsistencies in policies.

Well let me take another one because it is of significant interest to a major industry in this province. It's the oil and gas industry. Well the headline in the *Leader-Post*, Wednesday, October 17 is, "NDP hopes to make energy policy attractive." He says the NDP hand-picked Energy critic would support a price-sensitive royalty structure with special encouragement for projects using techniques for enhanced oil recovery. "There are ways in which (and I'm quoting) . . . There are ways in which we (the NDP) can use royalty holidays." That's what they said, speaking to the oil and gas industry.

But oh no. Oh no, Mr. Speaker. On March 12 the deputy leader of the NDP says that oil revenues are now going to be up and they're going to pay for the farm safety net programs. They're going to look at the resource sector for taxation to pay for the schools. They're going to look at them to pay for the agricultural support programs.

The member who preceded me in debate said the oil companies had a nice time under the Conservative government. We would look to the oil companies and change the oil royalty structure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is 13 flip-flops, changes in position, inconsistent positions by the New Democratic Party.

Now what is interesting about all of these, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that these are not minor policy items. Many of these policy items that I've talked about are fundamental to the economic growth, fundamental to the governance of this province. They're basic policies that political parties must have stands on, must have positions. And I've tabled 13 different ones of fundamental basic policies that the NDP has taken at least two positions on each one.

And that's why the people of this province believe and say — and New Democrats from one end of this province also say — that they have no policy and they have no plans, Mr. Speaker. I believe that I have proved beyond any doubt, Mr. Speaker, what the people are saying is right, and that is that the New Democratic Party have no policy, no plans, no vision, no sense of direction for the future of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — There are a lot of things they're not telling the hon. member from Humboldt. They've kept his head in the sand for quite a while, Mr. Speaker. They're obviously keeping it there because he is not listening and getting what he's being told. Do your own, I suggest. Don't take what they're telling you from the top, fellows, because not only are you missing . . .

You know, the other interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, and I can say this and I know this is the last budget debate I'll participate in. But in my years in politics in this province,

one thing that the NDP always prided themselves on were policy development. The one thing that you could always count on, and I remember some leaders in that party over time said, it's the biggest problem we've got. Everybody in the New Democratic Party wants a policy. They all want to speak to policy. The annual conventions were vigorous debates on policy. It used to be the rule in Saskatchewan that if you got two democrats together, they'd have a fight over policy, Mr. Speaker. And they used to pride themselves on the political debate internally in the policy development process.

What's happened over the last five years? What's happened over the last five years to the New Democratic Party in its policy development? Obviously, Mr. Speaker, they have lost that will to generate policies. They've lost, Mr. Speaker, I suggest for whatever reason, they have lost the ability to develop policies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, maybe the NDP are a reflection of the uncertainty that's out in the world today of an increasingly complex society, of people having difficulties assessing policy, having difficulties seeing and accepting answers to some complicated problems, hoping for simplistic answers, knowing that they're not there. Maybe the NDP reflects the uncertainty in the people.

That is all the more reason, Mr. Speaker, for political parties of any stripe to stand up and say to the people: here is where we're going; here's what we believe in; here are our policies; here is where we want to take you if we're given the opportunity and responsibility of governing. That is what an honest political party, a true political party should do in these times, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — And all we are seeing from the New Democratic Party is confusion, disarray, uncertainty, inconsistency, Mr. Speaker. They don't have a policy because they can't make up their mind.

We may get a bit though, Mr. Speaker, a better sense. I think we are. People of Ontario are certainly getting a better idea of the "what if" NDP government. You know next week the eyes, I suspect, of a lot of people interested in politics in Saskatchewan are on the Ontario government. Now never in the history of this province, in this country, has a government elected with a majority fallen so quickly from favour as the New Democratic government in Ontario. People in Ontario are putting their heads down and saying, Lord, let this pass from me. Let the next four years go so quickly so we can get rid of the New Democratic government of Ontario. They are fed up with them after six or seven months of an NDP government in Ontario.

Not only are they fed up with them, Mr. Speaker, the ultimate shame of the people of Ontario, they are embarrassed by the government that they have in Ontario. As one political observer says in Ontario: it's a cabinet and a government made by Planters. It's a can of mixed nuts down there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — It's a can of mixed nuts. I mean the first thing the new Premier of Ontario does is bring in an early retirement program. Two cabinet ministers have retired already, another one's under investigation, and one MLA has been kicked out already.

Now wait, Mr. Speaker. That's only their first six months. They've just begun to roll. They've just begun to roll, Mr. Speaker.

I predict, Mr. Speaker, and I believe the NDP inherited a deficit of \$500 million in Ontario when they took office. I'll predict that the next deficit of the Ontario government is going to be bigger than the total budget of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They will have missed it by several thousand times, Mr. Speaker. That's what'll happen. And that's what people know will happen with NDP governments in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, more people are leaving Ontario than left Saskatchewan in the Depression. The tragedy, Mr. Speaker, the tragedy is that the people leaving Ontario are not coming into the rest of the country; they're going to the United States. And that's a national tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, I always get a kick when we talk about population loss in the province and some of the statistics that are thrown around. But the interesting thing about the population today and the population when the next election is called, in spite of five years of very difficult agriculture, in spite of recession, Mr. Speaker, in spite of grasshoppers and drought, there are still 20,000 more people in this province today than when this government took office in 1982, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — And I'll tell you, they wouldn't have been here under an NDP government because you wouldn't have had the resource processing, the small business, the community development bonds, the farm safety net programs. And I could go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

But what's one of the other things? The Government of Ontario. You know, a lot of Canadians, and I think certainly on this side of the House, we take some pride when we take the oath of allegiance. We've never seen that as something politically wrong. We think that that's pride that we swear allegiance to the Queen and to the country. And I think most Canadians feel that way, that they take some pride in being able to take that oath of allegiance.

What's one of the first things that the NDP do in Ontario? You don't have to take the oath of allegiance to be appointed in the province of Ontario any more because the NDP took away the requirement of swearing the oath of allegiance, Mr. Speaker. Talk about support for institutions of this country. The Government of Ontario is destroying the fundamental institutions of this country. And, Mr. Speaker, I would predict that that is a belief held by many New Democrats who serve, who want to be government in various jurisdictions in this province, in this country.

Mr. Speaker, now in Ontario, they've raised the welfare and thrown the money around that the statistics show and the writers are saying that in the province of Ontario you have to be earning \$45,000 a year. If you're earning less than that in the province of Ontario, you're better off on welfare.

Is that the type of government that the people of this country want spreading beyond the borders of Ontario? Well I say no. I believe the people of this province are going to say no. I believe that these beliefs that welfare should be better than work is not a belief of the people of Saskatchewan. I believe that.

(1630)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — I happen to believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the people of this province believe that the oath of allegiance means something, and something important. And scrapping the oath of allegiance is not an idea or a proposal we want here in Saskatchewan. And I believe most of us in this party, all of us in this party, and I believe most fair-minded people will fight to keep that oath of allegiance as a very basic principle in this province and this country.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP talk about taxes. And I would sure like, Mr. Speaker, to put some of the NDP positions on taxes again before the people and certainly before this Assembly.

The NDP . . . I've talked about harmonization and how they favour one tax. That's their stated policy; they're now trying to change it. But they also . . . Mr. Speaker, let me talk about death taxes, inheritance taxes, succession duties. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, no, the hon. member says, oh, she doesn't favour it. I've gone through a list of nearly 15, where members of your party are taking totally different positions.

Let me tell you what one of the federal New Democratic Party members from the province of Saskatchewan says, Simon de Jong, NDP MP (Member of Parliament) for Regina-Qu'Appelle, in a householder distributed last spring, says: we should bring back the taxing of estates, inheritance, or by an annual tax on net wealth. That's what the federal NDP said in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Don't tell me they don't favour succession duties. Do you want to know why they won't say what their plan or policy is? Because they're afraid to, Mr. Speaker. They either, Mr. Speaker, have to admit they don't have one, or face that they have their hidden agenda, Mr. Speaker.

And let me go with what the NDP in Ontario say. A succession duty, Mr. Speaker, and they want to bring it back and they want to put it on small businesses and farms, Mr. Speaker. So the inheritance tax is part of the NDP belief, philosophy, and proposals.

And let me talk about payroll taxes. That's a tax. I mean the more people you hire, the more tax you're going to pay. I mean there's something illogical about a payroll

tax. I would think that anybody that believes in economic development would accept that there is a fundamental error in the rationale for a payroll tax. When you're trying to create jobs and get people to create more jobs and businesses to hire more people, you want to encourage that. I mean, that just makes sense to me and I think it makes sense to most people in this province.

Well what did the NDP do in the Government of Manitoba? They brought in a payroll tax. The more people you hire the higher your tax would pay, eventually you hire fewer people, put them out of work.

Mr. Speaker, let me go through the NDP tax positions. They've taken two positions on harmonization, talked about succession duties, and their position here in Saskatchewan and in Ontario, and the NDP payroll tax in the province of Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've said that we'd put back the gas tax, and it's very interesting, Mr. Speaker. The NDP said it should have been there all the time. They criticized us for taking it off in the first place — very, Mr. Speaker, very inconsistent positions. I also find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP don't want to talk about things like succession duties and inheritance taxes and payroll taxes.

Well let me tell you what is the topic of conversation across this province. What is the topic of conversation across this province is how the New Democratic Party can ask to be government when it has no policy plans or it has a hidden agenda which goes contrary to the interests of the people of this province . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — And it's contrary, I suggest, to the very fibre of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that what I've seen over the last while and fortunately — it took a while but the polls are now giving me some comfort, Mr. Speaker . . . that the the NDP have no plan, no policies. In today's complex society, Mr. Speaker, it is no longer good enough for governments to be or parties to be inconsistent, contradictory, and illogical, as the NDP are, Mr. Speaker. The people demand, are asking, and are asking for more, Mr. Speaker. I say it's not good enough for the NDP to have that position. It's not good enough in this highly complex society with increasing change and rapid change. Mr. Speaker, it's no longer good enough for any political party to waffle about its programs and try and hide behind positions and hide positions from the people.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's epitomized, it is epitomized . . . and I say it's no longer good enough, Mr. Speaker, for leaders of any political party to refuse to debate on issues like agriculture, as happened. The Leader of the New Democratic Party wouldn't participate in the Wheat Pool debate on agriculture, wouldn't participate in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* forum on the rural way of life.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are demanding more. They're demanding it from this government. They're demanding it from the New Democratic Party. They're demanding it from the Liberal party. And, Mr. Speaker, the only party that has stood up before the

people of this province and said we have a plan, a direction, we have a vision for this province that will mean hope for the people of this province, opportunity for the people of this province, jobs for the people of this province, stability for the farmers is the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan. And I'm proud to support this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, if things are as good for the Conservative Party as the previous speaker said they are, then I just can't quite figure out why we're late in the fifth year of their mandate and they haven't called an election yet. And his last two or three comments were . . . he said, well we have plan, we have a program. But you know what? He spoke for almost an hour and didn't say one thing. He talked character assassination; he talked about Ontario and Manitoba. He gave a political speech that sounded just like he was in opposition, where the people are going to put them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Right where the people are going to put them, because the people aren't treating them like government. The people are treating them like opposition and they're acting like opposition. They're not leading, they're floundering.

He failed to talk about his programs, but he gave a tremendous personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition, and that's the strategy of course. Of course the strategy is to attack the Leader of the Opposition personally because the Leader of the Opposition is so far out ahead that they're striking him from behind. That's what he's doing.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help but notice how the Minister of Justice looked so relaxed and calm and getting into his speech with a smile on his face. Why? Because he don't care any more. He's gone. He jumped ship and he's swimming to shore, but he's leaving the rest of his comrades to sink. Or maybe not, maybe they'll all quit; who knows. If they don't quit, they'll be quit by the people.

But I'll tell you, he can jump ship, feel relaxed, get his reprieve from the death sentence set by the people of his province, but he will never hide because, I'll tell you, the legacy of that member, Minister of Justice, and his colleagues and the Premier of this province, will not be struck from the record of this province in its entire history because it has created chaos. It has created hardships. It's created a situation in Saskatchewan where people are literally walking away because they can't stand this government any more.

That legacy will not be struck from the record and that legacy will be in very bold print in the history of this province. And that is the reason that the last time there was a Tory government they weren't here for 40 or 50 years, and after this Tory government they're not going to be back for 40 or 50 years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk today about several topics. First I want to start with some of the things in my own constituency that are being effected. I notice again in this budget, this government has cut back the funding to PAMI — the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute.

I can remember back in 1988, Mr. Speaker, when this government, this Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, tried to do away with PAMI. And if it wasn't for a bold and brave fight put up by the people of Humboldt and the opposition and all of the other people who are interested in seeing an institute in rural Saskatchewan providing jobs, that Premier, that Minister of Agriculture and his party would have taken away PAMI out of Humboldt, Saskatchewan.

But there's been a great revelation, Mr. Speaker. There's been a great revelation even though again the budget is cut, another chipping away at the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, creating more instability.

The revelation is that all of a sudden this government says, well we're going to put people in rural Saskatchewan. They're going to put people in rural Saskatchewan with their big fair share offering. That's the fair share offering. They put in an office in Watrous, Saskatchewan. Mind you, the lease in that office is only for six months so I'm not sure what the terms of reference is for the people who are working there.

This government is playing politics, playing politics with the lives of people — the heartless government that Saskatchewan has. Because on one hand they're trying to take things out of rural Saskatchewan and on the other hand they're saying we're going to have this fair share idea because we think it's a good political ploy and we're going to tell people there's going to be 100 to 200 towns that are going to get government offices and create employment.

But what did they do a year ago in Humboldt, Saskatchewan? They privatized the SaskPower maintenance crew. Five families, Mr. Speaker. And all of a sudden now, oh no, we're going to put offices in rural Saskatchewan. Well that's hypocritical. That's totally hypocritical. And as a matter of record, there have been over a thousand jobs lost in rural Saskatchewan — over a thousand government jobs lost in rural Saskatchewan. And now they're saying they're going to put them back.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is why nobody in this province believes this government. That is why the Minister of Justice makes an opposition speech. He doesn't talk about the long-term plan. It's all short-term political patchwork to try to salvage a government that is floundering and sinking and drowning in the sea of contempt that people have for them.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker. I can remember not too many months ago there was a great big sign in front of the Humboldt hospital. There was going to be a big renovation project. And mysteriously the sign, half of it was knocked down not too many months later. And now the hospital board in Humboldt are having great difficulties negotiating with the government.

If they're so concerned about putting families and workers in rural Saskatchewan, what's the hold-up? Not only would it provide the health-care services that are necessary to keep . . . the changes that are necessary to keep the hospital operating, it provides the health-care services. It provides jobs for many people in the area. And they think people are going to believe that fair share is anything but a political plot to try to re-elect themselves? Of course they won't.

And then there's the Watrous hospital. Well I'll tell you the little story about the Watrous hospital. They moved the machinery on to build the new Watrous hospital a couple of days before the last election. Well it didn't work then, and it won't work again because every year they've cut back on the hospitals. They've cut back staff and services. And they're saying they want to build rural Saskatchewan. They say one thing and they do the opposite.

(1645)

And then when the Premier comes into Regina and talks to the people in Regina, he says well we're not going to do this very fast. It'll be about the same pace as we've done it over the years. Well that was about one a year. But he runs out to rural Saskatchewan and says we're going to have 100 to 200 departments in towns out here. Who would believe it, Mr. Speaker? Who would believe it?

So there are many, many things that the government is trying to do, but every one of them is to try to save their political hide because the people in Saskatchewan have been touched. And this is what this government doesn't understand. The longer they postpone the election, the more people's lives are being affected in rural Saskatchewan.

And every time a life is affected in rural Saskatchewan, they look at the government and ask why are you doing this to me? Why are you doing this to my neighbours, and why are you doing this to my community? That's the question. And as time goes on, more and more people are being affected.

But here is the big plan. Just think of it. We have farm families with record numbers being forced off the land, although the Premier says everything's fine. He's done everything he could. He's given out whole bunch of money; everything's great. Farm families being forced off the land, moved into the cities, towns and cities, eventually many of them may even move out of the province. But he's forcing farm families off the land into the cities, where they don't want to be. And now he's telling the people in the cities through his so-called fair share, we're going to take you, put you out in the country where you don't want to be — all the while affecting, directly affecting the lives of working people. And this is the legacy and this is the downfall of this government. They have no compassion for people. They have no idea how to treat people in any other manner than to get themselves re-elected.

But it doesn't work, Mr. Speaker. It won't work because the people of Saskatchewan understand the heartlessness of this government. They understand the hurt of moving

off farms. Neighbours understand when one family leaves, it's one less family for the community. And they rally around the neighbours, and we've seen several farm gate defences, several attempts to keep neighbours on the land. But does this government do anything about that? Absolutely not.

Oh, but the Premier, he keeps his own land deals going, I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, he seems to manage to get some . . . in times when many, many people are losing the land, the Premier seems to be acquiring it. Now isn't that funny?

An Hon. Member: — At fire-sale prices.

Mr. Upshall: — Acquiring it at fire-sale prices, as my colleague says. Absolutely.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's a story behind this. Farm Credit Corporation has a fund to fund all transactions that put a parcel of land in a deficit situation to the Credit Corporation. So if there's a transaction and land is devalued, then the Farm Credit Corporation fund picks it up. The transaction where a farmer can't make his . . . if he's renting the land and he can't make full rental payments, the Farm Credit Corporation fund makes up the difference.

So anybody who is involved in a land flip or a write-down can access this fund. That is not a widely known fact, Mr. Speaker, because very few farmers know about this. I've talked to farmers who found out about it, that there was a fund available, after they'd gone through the process. Did the Premier know about this? That's my question. Obviously a Premier or Minister of Agriculture, he would know about this. There are advocate groups running around telling people about this fund now and trying to explain that they have options.

I ask you this question, Mr. Speaker, and the people of this province and the government opposite, why did the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Minister of Agriculture, not take it upon himself to familiarize the people of Saskatchewan in financial difficulties, losing the land, with a program that was available when he accessed it, when he got the benefit of it?

I say that that is not very honest. I say that when Farm Credit Corporation holds nearly 70 per cent of the land in Saskatchewan held by institutions, nearly 700,000 acres held by Farm Credit Corporation, this Premier, this Minister of Agriculture has a duty, has a responsibility to ensure that the farm families of Saskatchewan know what our programs are provincially and federally. He failed to do that for the people of Saskatchewan. Mind you he spent millions of dollars on advertising his own government and his own department, millions of dollars telling how great things were, but he didn't tell people how to access a program.

And that is not right. And I'll tell you that is why the people of Saskatchewan don't trust him.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, the minister managed to figure out a way how to acquire land at a time when a lot of people are losing their land. Isn't that odd. He can lobby

for himself, but he doesn't lobby for the people, the other farmers of Saskatchewan.

And let's take it one step further. Let's take it one step further. Look at the budget prepared and presented to this House. Is there one inkling or one suggestion of a debt restructuring program? Not one hint of a debt restructuring program that the farmers have been crying out for, for years and years.

And everybody knows that you have to balance your income with your debt in order to survive. This government's taken an approach where debt doesn't matter. It's only income that they're worried about. It won't work. It won't work for most people but it seems to be working for the Premier, seems to be working for the Premier. Debt restructuring seemed to fall in his lap quite conveniently.

But what about the other people who are losing their land, Mr. Speaker. What about the other people whose families are being forced off, who are going through tremendous emotional crisis? The Minister of Agriculture, I say, has no heart. And if he did he would not be continuing this type of action. He would let everyone know what all the programs are and not just take advantage of it himself.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now for a minute to the GRIP program. This is a program brought forward by the government — Canada, Canadian government and the Saskatchewan government. The GRIP program that was supposed to be, as promised, a long-term income safety net program. Well I'll tell you we have not seen it because it's failed as a long-term program. There will be in the short-term, no doubt, two or three years there'll be some pay-outs, substantial premiums and some pay-outs.

But they say the program has to be actuarially sound. If you start figuring out, Mr. Speaker, how many dollars over the first two or three years that will be spent, and then think that the program has to be actuarially sound, I'll tell you it will be a good many years of farmers paying high premiums and no return if they say this program is going to be actuarially sound. And they know that. That's why, again, it is a short-term program.

We have seen a series of meetings around Saskatchewan this spring, tremendous amount of expense. Here again a government that is spending millions of dollars on promoting itself, and that's what these meetings were for. They were getting very good turn-outs to the meetings. The government interpreted it as being supportive. Well I suppose they would like to think it was being supportive, people were being supportive, but I'll tell you, they weren't very supportive when they left the meetings, especially those people who went to three or four or five, up to seven or eight meetings, those people that I've talked to, who followed them around. Information from one meeting to the next — and the associate minister sits over there and smiles — information from one meeting to the next was changing.

And at those meetings, one of the main points that this government brings out is that the GRIP safety net program was developed by 19 producer groups in conjunction

with the government because they wanted . . . try to let people think that it was the producer groups who developed this program. Well we have seen many disclaimers by producer groups, because there's been 80 to 100 changes since last October when the producer groups no longer had input into the program, Mr. Speaker. And farmers came away confused. They wondered why the information was being changed from day to day, from meeting to meeting.

The question I ask, Mr. Speaker, is: if this government was serious about bringing forward a program, a program that would really help farmers, they could have done it long ago. But you see, they spend taxpayers' dollars with how many meetings — I just forget the total number — but many, many meetings around the province, and did it accomplish anything? They thought they were going to accomplish a spontaneous mood in the country; this was going to be their saviour, their re-election plan.

But it failed on them. It failed because they got caught in their own trap of deception trying to fool people, giving us information that was maybe accurate one day but inaccurate the next day. And so people don't trust the program. People say, well no. I've talked to hundreds of farmers who say, you know, first couple of years, sure I'm going to get some money. But if I can afford it, I won't go in the program. So then the government got the message. People weren't accepting the program as readily as they thought they might.

So what do they do? Instead of trying to clear up the program, laying it out in point form exactly what the rules were, no, they didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. They say, well we're going to get these guys. We're going to force them into the program.

So then comes along the third line of defence announcement, third line defence that was supposed to be . . . Now just let me read here. This is from the document — and I'll be using this quite often — *Report to the Minister of Agriculture: Grain, and Oilseeds Safety Net Committee*. And I quote, "The third line of defence represents a systematic approach to events which are beyond the scope of the first and second line programs".

That's the definition. It's pretty clear. The committees made it very clear the first line was the farmer's income off his grain. The second line of defence was a long-term safety net program and the third line was independent of line one and two — special occasions when the income was so low that there needed to be a boost. And this is what farmers needed this spring, Mr. Speaker.

Not only did they need it this spring, it was the Associate Minister of Agriculture, the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture and all his colleagues running around the province saying, we need cash; we're going to go down and get cash.

Then the announcement comes. Farmers were expecting some money to bridge the gap to the fall when the GRIP program would begin. What did they get? They got let down totally. And if these members and ministers of this government would have enough courage to go out to rural Saskatchewan and listen to what the farmers are

saying, they would know just how badly that was accepted. And the farmers weren't being greedy. All they wanted was to be able to put a crop in. What about those people, Mr. Speaker, who are going to be forced off the farm?

Now just a minute. This is a government that was saying they've got a safety net program that is going to help farmers. I say for two or three years, yes but long term, no for many reasons.

But let's just say that this program were to work. What about the farmer who is going to be forced off the land this spring? What about the farmers whom I've heard about who have fuel bills from last year to pay and won't be able to get fuel this year possibly? What about the people who are going to be forced off? This government is denying them the right to access a program that they say is going to keep them farming.

Had they brought forward a third line of defence, a payment like they said they were going to, those people would be able to stay on the farm, for a few years anyway. But they refused to do that, Mr. Speaker. They refused to do that because the whole program is designed to try to re-elect governments, and this is the plot that's starting to develop.

I don't know if you heard, Mr. Speaker, on the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio the other day. I was driving in my car and I heard the Minister of Agriculture say this. He said, well you never know, with Mr. Mazankowski as Finance minister, with Mr. Clark as high portfolio, with Mr. McKnight as Agriculture minister, well you never, he says, maybe we'll have enough influence to get some more money for farmers. You never know.

So when do you think — is it possible, Mr. Speaker? — when do you think this possible payment might be? Is it now in the spring when farmers are desperately crying out for a few dollars to put their crop in? No. If there is a payment, and I suspect there might be because that's the *modus operandi* of this government, it'll be right in the midst of an election.

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

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.