

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Solomon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to stand in the Assembly and introduce to you and to my colleagues in the legislature approximately 21 grade 5 and grade 6 students and their chaperons from Centennial School which is located in the central part of my constituency on Dalgliesh.

Mr. Speaker, they are located in your gallery and I'd ask all members in the Assembly to join with me in welcoming these students. I look forward to meeting with them after question period to discuss some of the events of the day. Welcome, students from Centennial School.

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

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a group of 38 grade 7 students from Westberry School in Kindersley. They're seated in your Speaker's gallery, Mr. Speaker. Their teachers are Brent Triffo and Candace Friesen, and their chaperons are Henry Dunfield and Tolanda Baker.

I'll be meeting these students and their teachers and chaperons for pictures and refreshments following question period. I'd ask the Assembly to please join with me in welcoming these students here today.

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce on behalf of my colleague, the member for Regina Rosemont, 18 grade 5 and 6 students seated in the west gallery. These students are from Ken Jenkins School and are accompanied by their teachers, Wally Sadowsky and Judy Hunter. I will be meeting with them shortly after question period, Mr. Speaker, and look forward to a short visit with them then.

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

**Mr. Sonntag:** — I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly here today, through you, a good friend of mine and Member of Parliament for The Battlefords and Meadow Lake, Mr. Len Taylor. And I don't believe I will be meeting him for refreshments afterwards.

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Abortion Funding

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. My question, Mr. Speaker, centres around the information that we received yesterday through a ministerial statement.

First of all, I compliment the minister on looking at a way of an educational program to advise young people on unwanted pregnancies. However, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province back in October — in fact, two-thirds of the people in this province — spoke out in a plebiscite and told the political parties of the day, during that election campaign, unequivocally that they do not want their taxpayers' dollars going towards the funding of therapeutic abortions.

There is no disputing that, Madam Minister. However, Madam Minister, we find that in the last few days you've cut funding for prescription drugs, diabetics; cut funding for eye examinations and ambulatory services; decreased funding for nursing home residents, hospitals, and nurses. Madam Minister, there wasn't a plebiscite regarding these cuts. In fact, I believe you promised the opposite.

Can you tell us how you decided that you have no money for these critical areas, but you found money for something people spoke out very loudly and clearly about.

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

**Hon. Ms. Simard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite knows that the legal and constitutional implications with respect to the funding of abortions are such that a province cannot de-insure abortions. The member opposite knows that. Because from 1982 to 1991 the government opposite . . . the party opposite, who were then in government, chose not to take any steps whatsoever in this direction. They chose not to take any steps.

If they felt so strongly about it at that time, I would ask them why didn't they take any concrete measures. And you know why? Because they knew it was illegal. Because they couldn't take any measures.

Instead they chose to put forward a plebiscite the day before an election, for totally political reasons, playing with people's lives and raising expectations. They put forward a plebiscite just before an election — that they knew they were going to lose — because they would never have to implement it.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister, you talk about a legal opinion, and certainly I think the final word "opinion" is the word that we all are interested in. An opinion, I might add, Madam Minister, which is contrary to what people have said. Even so, Madam Minister, your government is quite fond of forcing your will on people and passing legislation that bypasses the law. In fact you did it to government employees and you're doing it to farmers.

Madam Minister, had you even considered legal opinions which clearly show that the move is well within your jurisdiction? Aren't there opinions out there, Madam Minister, that would indicate . . . and I believe the federal Justice minister has given you that option, Madam Minister?

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

**Hon. Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have chosen to play politics with a very, very serious issue, and that's really what that plebiscite was all about. That's what that plebiscite was all about. Our independent legal opinions and opinions we've received from the Justice department have clearly set out that it is illegal and unconstitutional. Now I want . . . and so I want the members opposite to understand that very clearly.

We however have heard what the voters said in the plebiscite, and for that reason we have instituted a policy to try and reduce the number of unintended pregnancies in the province. Our goal is to reduce teen-age pregnancies and unintended pregnancies. And hopefully — now I don't know whether we will achieve this — but hopefully in doing that, we can also reduce the number of abortions obtained by Saskatchewan residents.

Now I want to make this clear. I say, obtained by Saskatchewan residents, because there are many women leaving the province today to obtain their abortions in other jurisdictions, under the former government.

And so these statistics are going to be very difficult for us to compile. But our goal is to try and reduce those abortions. That's what we're aiming for.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Well, Madam Minister, when it comes to life . . . and I believe very sincerely that there's a real value in life from the moment of conception. And, Madam Minister, it is exactly that fact that is causing people, the fact that the former government did . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I ask the government members not to interrupt when he's asking a question.

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister, I want to remind you that I believe the Premier at one time made a comment that he personally is against abortion. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, as well, you and your government have indicated that you are willing to listen to people and you're going to be consultative. In fact, Madam Minister, you've also indicated that you will accept the will of the people. Well it appears that again you have not listened totally to the will of the people. And your Premier indeed has put his political agenda ahead of public interest.

Madam Minister, can it be the real reason why you are ignoring public demands is because your NDP (New Democratic Party) Party has again blinded you to the reality of what the public of this province really desire?

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

**Hon. Ms. Simard:** — I believe that the public of this province want their government to follow the law. That's what I believe.

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

**Hon. Ms. Simard:** — And I believe . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I've asked the government members not to interrupt, and I ask the opposition members not to interrupt when the minister is speaking.

**Hon. Ms. Simard:** — And I believe that the very cheap political games that the members opposite have played with this issue is reprehensible. And I want to know where the member who just posed the question was for the last nine years. I saw him sitting on these back benches, Mr. Speaker. He was not able to convince his government to de-insure abortion funding. He was not able to.

And did they make any attempt at all to reduce abortions, Mr. Speaker? No. Instead they withdrew programs that would have contributed to reducing the number of unintended pregnancies. They cut back on support services for poor people, many of whom are single mothers, for example, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite took no concrete steps whatsoever to deal with the problem, which is unintended pregnancies.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Next question.

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister, first of all, the fact that you have indicated in this House that a number of women were leaving the province, is a strong indication of the direction our government was going.

Secondly, regarding where I was as a minister . . . secondly, as a minister, I just want to remind Madam Minister that I didn't indeed sit in this House for nine years. I've just been here since 1986.

Madam Minister, I would also suggest to the people of Saskatchewan that the former government gave the people of Saskatchewan an opportunity to speak out in a plebiscite. And as the Minister of Justice indicated a few days ago, 53 per cent voted on your behalf. But I would also suggest, of that 53 per cent, more than two-thirds who voted for you voted for you on the basis that they believed that you would honour the plebiscite that was put before them.

Are you saying that plebiscites — giving people an opportunity to speak out — are political? I think that, Madam Minister, that's absurd.

Madam Minister, if you will not honour the three plebiscites presented on October 21, '91, I'm wondering if you will again disband the fourth plebiscite that was put out on October 21 that gave your party the mandate to govern, and indeed give the people another chance to vote.

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

**Hon. Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to make the comment once again that implementing the plebiscite results would exceed the constitutional authority of the province, violate equality requirements under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, and violate the requirements of the Canada Health Act, which would likely result in financial penalties to the province.

And I want to say that the members opposite knew that when they put that plebiscite forward and tried to play with the feelings and emotions of Saskatchewan people as they moved into an election that they knew they were going to lose — that they knew they were going to lose. And they knew they would never have to implement the provisions or the results of the plebiscite, Mr. Speaker. That's the political games they were playing. And for nine and a half years they did nothing to deal with this problem which is to reduce unintended pregnancies. That's their commitment to life, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister, the former government gave people an opportunity to express their opinion through a vote. And the former government also, in giving the people the opportunity to express their opinion, gave them the assurance that if re-elected, they would indeed abide by the plebiscites that were placed out there.

You've also indicated, Madam Minister, that you've sought legal opinion. Well I've also indicated as well, Madam Minister, that there are opinions on the legal side . . . legal opinion on the other side as well.

I'm asking you if you will table any information that would justify your claim, and I'm also asking you, Madam Minister, if you wouldn't indeed challenge the legislation to see whether indeed you could as a government discontinue funding for abortions.

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

**Hon. Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Speaker, we did make our opinions available to the public, from MacPherson Leslie and Tyerman. It's my understanding that opinions of the Justice department aren't normally released, although we did receive opinions from the Justice department as well that stated the same thing.

We also received opinions from the pro-life group which were considered in the whole mix, were reviewed by the Justice department, and I feel that they very adequately dealt with those opinions in their legal analysis.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the member's question opposite about referring the matter to a court, I want to make this statement. This is a decision for the government to make, Mr. Speaker. The government has made this decision based on the legal opinions which are very clear, very clear and very precise, having discussed all the philosophical and moral implications as well. Thank you.

### Changes to GRIP

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture and it relates to the NDP government's desire to impose its will on people at any cost.

Mr. Minister, yesterday the courts granted farmers something that you refused to do. Farmers asked for extension to the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) deadline so that they could decide what their options were, so that they can opt out of the program that has

been recklessly gutted by you, Mr. Minister. They had to go to court to do that. You refused to honour their requests, and you told them to take a hike. Now you are being told to take a hike, Mr. Minister. Will you take the next step and give the farmers the 1991-92 as an option so that they can choose which program they really want to have?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the impression left by the member opposite with respect to the court-ruling yesterday. The ruling has indicated that farmers will continue to have the right to opt out until a court judgement is made. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health said that your government is prepared to follow the law, just indicated that a little earlier. The judge was very clear in her ruling, Mr. Minister. She said that, and I quote:

“It would appear that . . . (you have) put the cart before the horse.”

“If the Crown and agents of the Crown undertake costly system changes before effecting the necessary legal changes, they cannot defeat the rights of individuals affected by their conduct on the basis of costs which the Crown, or its agents, have voluntarily incurred.”

It is your incompetence, Mr. Minister, that she is talking about. It is your inability to put the farmers' interests ahead of your political agenda and your personal pride, and that's what has gotten in the way of the farmers.

Will you today stop your crusade against farmers and allow them the option of the '91 or the '92 GRIP?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I find the comments of the member opposite interesting. The process that was followed in Saskatchewan was the process established by their committee that would have reported to them as they reported to us. There may be a difference in that we listen when we consult, and we implement the results of the opinions of people who tell us what they believe about programs.

I find it very interesting that you would talk . . . that they would talk about the rights of farmers when they listen to their federal counterpart, who I presume they're supporting, when he says he is going to renege on their third line of defence commitment, that he believes that he shouldn't give income support to farmers. They not only don't challenge that, but in the House they voted against the \$500 million that farmers and the federal committee itself indicated last year was owing to farmers. And they voted against third line of defence. I find it curious the kind of contentions and . . . (inaudible) . . . it makes.

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Just so the minister understands very clearly, I'll ask the very simple question, all without any preamble: will you give the farmers the option between '91 and '92 GRIP?

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, the program that has been designed by farmers and implemented by the government this spring and in conjunction with their committee, the 1992 GRIP is the program which is in place for 1992.

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, you have sent farmers a letter telling them they must sign a waiver absolving you from any legal responsibility if they want to sign up for insurance. You also are promising to bring forward legislation that forces farmers to accept the program that they find unacceptable.

Mr. Minister, in this you are admitting your own incompetence and in making farmers sign the contract under duress. Will you tell this Assembly and the public whether you intend to introduce this Draconian legislation and if so, when?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that farmers have had their program information. They've had a couple of months to consider it. They have dropped out in a relatively few numbers. About 3 per cent of the farmers have decided to opt out choosing one option or the other in the program. About 2 per cent have joined back in. I even understand that there's a brand-new member in the program from the statement he made in the House, if I'm not mistaken, sitting opposite. And I congratulate him on that wise choice.

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, you required your deputy to sign the affidavit that was presented to the court, and it says this:

These amendments will include a provision in which the notice of the 1992 changes will be deemed to have been given prior to . . .

. . . March 15 to the producers. When are you going to table that legislation?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, the business of the House will be decided by our House Leader. The fact is that the provisions for the 1992 program were brought forward this spring. And the members opposite in conjunction with their federal counterparts have been putting road-blocks in the way of the implementation of proper income support for farmers from day one.

I ask the members opposite when they're going to get off their cheap political games and start worrying about the real interests of farmers so they have a farm income

protection program that is adequate and that holds the responsibility to the federal government for income support that's as a result of losses because of international trade practices. That's not the responsibility of Saskatchewan farmers or the Saskatchewan province.

When are you going to join us and really stand up for farmers and the needs they have in Saskatchewan?

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, you stand there and you keep on saying the same thing — blame somebody else, blame somebody else, blame somebody else. It's your responsibility for the decisions that you made. It's your decision to make changes to GRIP, and you decided to do that.

Now I have a copy of suggested changes to GRIP from the people who are closest to the program and closest to the farmers. They submitted it to you, and it was from the marketing agents. They said: producers often feel that spokespersons who have the government's ear do not accurately convey the down-on-the-farm opinion.

Mr. Minister, this brief contains many reasonable changes to GRIP. Did you even consider this brief, or is this why you put a gag order on your marketing agents?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to consult with respect to the new program was broadly offered. We received recommendations not only from marketing agents, but from many farmers and farm organizations, and it is their recommendations that were brought forward in a report by producers to the government, by a committee that was the same committee and basic structure as had been previously established.

And the member opposite knows without standing there and playing silly games, that the changes that were recommended were based on serious flaws in the existing program. It continues obviously to be an imperfect program. As I've said before, you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but we will continue to work with farmers to design the kind of income support that Saskatchewan farmers deserve.

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, the marketing agents referred this information to you. And now I'm going to ask you a very simple question: will you guarantee to me that the information provided to me by these marketing agents will not give you cause to fire them?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure the question deserves a response. The fact is that we listen to people. I have phone calls from marketing agents and farmers and others in the community on a daily basis. And I go home and I visit my community and we talk about these things. The fact is that people are feeling very

comfortable about consulting with this government, an experience I'm sure they never had the opportunity to enjoy before.

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, it is painfully evident that you have no idea what you are doing to farmers or the farm economy with your budget, the way you presented the budget, the way that you cut farm programs right . . . just about every one that there was, just as your Premier, Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Health have no idea what they are doing — no plan, no consultation, no new ideas.

Mr. Minister, for farm families of the province, will you back off your revenge campaign against rural Saskatchewan? Will you give farmers this whole year to work out their GRIP program and then give you some new and innovative ideas that even the marketing agents know more about than you do?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — I surely don't have to remind the members opposite about what the state of affairs is in Saskatchewan. The presumed deficit this year, as a result of the legacy you left us, was a \$1.3 billion potential deficit this year which we had to address in this spring's budget.

I have met with the affected groups. It is clear that this kind of a budget has an impact on everybody in Saskatchewan. It is clear that the people in Saskatchewan understand that this issue needs to be addressed. And it's clear that they're willing to deal with these tough issues along with government and not play around with silly talk like I get from the members opposite.

They're willing to take the hard news and deal with it. I've met with the cattle feeders. I've met with the hog producers. I've met with the grain farmers. They know these are tough considerations, and they know that across Saskatchewan everyone is dealing with this budget. And everybody's going to be putting their shoulder to the wheel to bring Saskatchewan back to the proud position we were in before it was devastated by the members opposite.

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

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you know you're legally wrong because you're going to have to bring in legislation. You know you're morally wrong and you're ethically wrong. Why don't you admit that and give the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan the reasonable option of '91 GRIP or '92 and let them show you which is the one they want?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I would . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Does the member from Arm River have a question? Otherwise I would ask him not to interrupt.

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — I think the member from Arm River was just intervening . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. The minister also knows that he is not to comment on remarks made by the Chair. Directly to the answer.

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry about that. I want to say to the member opposite that the fact is that the member from Arm River did in fact indicate in the House that he is a member of the new program. And maybe you two should have a discussion about the quality of this program.

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

**Mr. Swenson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Deputy Premier, given the fact that the court in Regina yesterday said that your Minister of Agriculture is legally wrong, that he has proved himself to be morally wrong, Mr. Minister, will you now do the right thing and ask that your Minister of Agriculture, before he brings in Draconian legislation in this legislature to set aside the legitimate wishes of farmers, will you, sir, instruct that minister to stay those court proceedings and get on with doing the right thing in this province, and that is giving farmers a choice — a choice that farmers will prove to your government, sir, the way that agriculture should be run in this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to read a little more carefully. The ruling indicated that farmers should have the right to opt out of the program until such a time as the court decision is made. I should remind the member opposite that in putting in place last year's program, the federal-provincial agreement was signed on September 18, just about a week after most of us had our grain in the bin. Thank you very much.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### GRIP Deadline

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a statement on an issue to some importance to the farmers of Saskatchewan. As Mr. Speaker will know, the deadline for opting out of the gross revenue insurance program or GRIP has been delayed due to a court decision.

It is important to remind producers that they are still required to make their decision on program coverage and price selection by May 15, 1992. The province and the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation are implementing the court decision on the opting-out provisions of the 1992 gross revenue insurance program.

But I must remind producers that they must make all other decisions regarding crop insurance coverage and price selection by May 15, 1992. As well, all other program requirements such as their obligation to file seeded acreage reports continue to apply. Any producers who require additional information on their crop insurance

contracts or on any of the requirements for 1992 GRIP are encouraged to contact their crop insurance agent or the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation directly. Their toll-free number is 1-800-667-3300.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is important to realize that despite such actions as yesterday's court decision, 1992 GRIP is here to stay because it is what producers have asked for.

There are a number of factors known to all members of the Assembly in regards to this program. First, it is well known that the federal government enacted a program which had been rejected by its farmers advisory committee. Second, as was clearly shown during the recent provincial election, farmers across Saskatchewan had rejected GRIP in the form it was presented and were demanding changes. The previous administration had set up an advisory group to suggest changes to the program, and on the change of government we instructed what was essentially the same advisory group to find those solutions.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of who was in office this winter, the changes to GRIP would have been recommended in the same fashion. The difference is that we made the decision to listen to farmers and implement their wishes. This program does not meet all needs, no safety net program ever will. But far more farmers are satisfied with new GRIP than are rejecting it. But for whatever reason, there are those who continue to throw up road-blocks to prevent our farmers from having the kind of program they need. And now the federal government is announcing that it has every intention of renegeing on its commitment to a third line of defence.

Mr. Speaker, the changes to GRIP will survive these road-blocks because they are what producers want. I think the real question we must deal with is what motivates the members opposite, their federal cousins, and their former colleagues in their attempts to . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order.

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

**The Speaker:** — Before I ask the opposition to have an opportunity to reply, I want to remind ministers that a ministerial statement is not to be of a political nature. It is to set down only the policy of the government and not to contain a political statement of any kind. And in the future if that happens, I will intervene and not allow the statement.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Speaker, I would have raised it on a point of order, and I'm glad you made your decision. I want to point out to the Minister, number one, he thinks he's smarter than the court. He thinks he's smarter than farmers. He thinks he's smarter than marketing agents. And, Mr. Speaker, all I have asked him to do is give the people a choice to do what they want to do. And you were political and I will be political. You do it outside and get the farmers to choose. You haven't got the courage to do that.

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

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 9 — An Act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983**

**Hon. Mr. Penner:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that an Act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**Bill No. 10 — An Act to amend The Crown Minerals Act and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts resulting from the enactment of this Act**

**Hon. Mr. Penner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that an Act to amend The Crown Minerals Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

**MOTIONS**

**Hours of Sitting**

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly and after some consultation with the opposition, I move, seconded by the member for Regina Hillsdale:

That, notwithstanding rule No. 3 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, when the Assembly adjourns on Friday, May 15, 1992, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 19, 1992.

Motion agreed to.

**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. Tchorzewski that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance, and the amendment thereto moved by Mr. Toth.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again it's a privilege to participate on behalf of the constituents that I represent in Saskatoon Broadway on the debate on the first budget of our newly elected government.

Since being elected on October 21, 1991, our government has had to grapple with the aftermath of nine and a half years of Tory waste and mismanagement — waste and mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, that has left the citizens of our province wallowing and wallowing in debt.

This has not been an easy task for the 55 members of our government. We have had a \$14 billion debt staring us in the face with all of the accompanying problems of bankers and bond dealers and credit agencies threatening to lower our credit rating.

Obviously this has had a serious impact on our ability to borrow money. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we have had to lower government expenditures and raise revenue. And so the process of trying to lower expenditures and raise revenues in the fairest way possible began once we were elected.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the taxpayers of this province that this has not been an easy task for the government members. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that none of us, and I say none of us, were elected to do what we have done. What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is increased taxes, cut services, and lay off employees.

When I began my political life over 10 years ago, times were relatively good. I'd always thought that while life here in Saskatchewan was pretty good, it could always be better. But that was 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker. Life here in our province has been tough. It has been really tough in the past 10 years under the rule of the Conservative Party.

Some of our citizens, Mr. Speaker, have suffered, and they have suffered dearly in the past 10 years. Working people have seen their wages decrease. There are citizens who are making less money today than they made 10 years ago. Poor people are living on less. Seniors are living on less. Students can't get jobs. Young people can't get into post-secondary institutions. Full-time workers now have part-time jobs. And the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

People have suffered. And our government — I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan — know this. People have lost hope and many no longer have their dreams of a better future.

Our budget, Mr. Speaker, is a tough budget. It is a bitter pill to swallow, there is no doubt about that. I am the last person and our government is the last person . . . we are the last people that want to see user fees for chiropractic and optometric services. We are the last people that want to see an increase in the deductible for the prescription drug plan. We are the last people that wanted to eliminate the Saskatchewan Pension Plan.

But these decisions were made. These choices were made by a government that is determined to regain our economic freedom from the whims of the Wall Streets and the Bay Streets. This budget, Mr. Speaker, is about Main Street, Saskatchewan and making decisions for our future.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — This year the taxpayers of Saskatchewan will pay \$760 million in interest on the debt — debt run up by the Tory predecessors.

Think about what \$760 million could have done. We

could have had no tax increases, Mr. Speaker, and we could have maintained our former level of services. Taxes went up by \$312 million and expenditures were cut by \$344 million. We could have balanced the budget and had a surplus if we didn't have to pay \$760 million in interest rates — interest that is leaving this province to the Bay Streets and the Wall Streets and people living outside of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget is a start to Saskatchewan's economic recovery. We have cut expenditures, including MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and cabinet expenditures, but there is much more to be done. I know the public have good ideas for more government savings and I want to hear from the public. Every MLA in this legislature wants to hear from the public if they have ideas about how we can save more money. If you have an idea, I say to you, let your MLA know so that we can follow up on it. And we will follow up on every solitary suggestion.

I know civil servants and people who work in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, have good ideas. Let us know. Let's work together so that we can make the savings together, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the people working in institutions that are publicly funded that you know better than we do. Let us know.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we have increased revenue by \$312 million. While individual and consumer taxes have been targeted as much as possible towards those who can pay, there is still much work to be done in creating a fair tax system. It is my view that our government must now begin to reorient the tax system so that it is fairer. The flat tax, Mr. Speaker, has got to go.

(1445)

Given the federal government's desire for constitutional reform, Saskatchewan is in a good position to talk about reform of the income tax system which at present, Mr. Speaker, is unfair. Wealthier Canadians do not pay their fair share of taxes, and I would say wealthier Saskatchewan citizens also don't pay their fair share of taxes. Saskatchewan is in a very limited position to make them pay.

The time has come, Mr. Speaker, for a fair taxation system in our country and in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the taxpayers of this province that it's time that our government looked at a fair taxation system. And I would propose that our government set up a committee or a commission to look at how we can reorient the tax system within Saskatchewan so that everyone pays their fair share.

While we have increased taxes in the fairest way possible, given our limited ability to change the tax system, we have also tried to protect those who are the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to be spending \$28 million in additional funding for those persons having to live on social assistance. Child hunger programs in this province will be increased by 35 per cent. Saskatchewan's child tax credit has increased by 25 per cent or \$250 per year per child. Grants for child care centres have gone up by

21 per cent. Income plans for low income seniors have increased by \$120 annually. Home care funding, Mr. Speaker, has increased by nearly 20 per cent or \$38 million. And special allowances for disabled persons, many of whom live in my riding, have increased by 25 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the most important people in this province who have been left out of the former government's desire to create a fair and humane society, the people living in northern Saskatchewan, will see their northern food allowance doubled to \$50 a month. And I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that \$4 million is going to be spent in northern Saskatchewan to improve water and sewer systems. And I'm also pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we will spend more than \$20 million — or pardon me — we will have \$20 million more to spend for people who require counselling, such as teen mothers, and family violence programs.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to turn for a moment to the AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.) memorandum of understanding with SaskPower. The member from the Liberal Party the other day in this House talked about the need for the NDP government to continue the process with AECL and SaskPower. Mr. Speaker, it is the opinion of this caucus that that deal was a bad deal. It simply meant that more money was going to be spent on a bad deal. And it simply meant, Mr. Speaker, that we could not afford to enter into any more bad deals.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I came to know after being elected as a government member of the legislature was that this former government, the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, entered into \$1.2 billion in bad deals. These people were so desperate for economic development that they would do absolutely anything to get people to come to our province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the taxpayers of this province that because of their desperation and because of their inability to know a good deal from a bad deal, we have a \$14 billion deficit. And the days of entering into bad deals simply for the sake of having a deal are over. They are over.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are citizens living in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan that would have liked to see our government go forward with a deal with AECL. But, Mr. Speaker, we would have spent over \$25 million on a path that would eventually have led to the development of a nuclear reactor, a nuclear reactor that would have cost the taxpayers of this province over \$1 billion.

Well I would say to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan that we can't afford these kinds of projects any more. Not that we ever could afford these projects.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — And, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the taxpayers of this province, there are other, alternative forms of economic development that will lead to new power production, that are environmentally safe, that use renewable energy sources, and that don't cost as much

money, and they are in fact located — decentralized — throughout Saskatchewan.

And the alternatives, Mr. Speaker, are biomass, wind power, co-generation, solar, supply side management, and conservation. These kinds of programs, if entered into by SaskPower, would lead to more jobs, safer forms of energy development, and we could meet the electrical needs of the citizens and the companies in our province in the future, Mr. Speaker. We do not need to build a capital intensive nuclear reactor which in the long run creates very few jobs.

Mr. Speaker, if we look to our neighbours in Alberta, we will find that the Alberta government has entered into this kind of a project. We do not need to re-invent the wheel. Our neighbours in Alberta have a program for renewable energy projects. Mr. Speaker, the renewable energy projects in Alberta have stimulated their economic growth while at the same time developed renewable sources of power that are environmentally safe.

They have a centre that allows for a mandate to advise the Alberta government on renewable energy technologies. They promote the development and use of renewable energy technologies. They support economic diversification to the development of renewable energy and energy conservation technologies. And they encourage, Mr. Speaker, private developers to construct and operate projects on renewable energy generation, energy recovery, and energy conservation.

Mr. Speaker, this is the way we've got to go in the future — not nuclear reactor, not huge megaprojects like Rafferty-Alameda, but a new direction, new ways where we have renewable energy sources.

Mr. Speaker, we can have small power producers of biomass, wind, hydro, solar, geothermal, peat resources, and co-generation. The public does not have to fund these projects, Mr. Speaker. Small, independent producers of power can enter into long-term contracts with the Power Corporation for our future electrical needs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've spoken for a moment about a potential economic development initiative for the people of this province, an economic development initiative, Mr. Speaker, that would be decentralized. It would mean that people living in rural Saskatchewan could enter into long-term contracts with the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. It means that we would have a renewable energy source in our province like wind, biomass, peat moss, co-generation. It would mean economic development and it would mean jobs. And the people of this province are desperate for jobs.

It would mean no new public money; the money would be put up by private investors. And it would mean that SaskPower would have to change its corporate thinking, reorient its corporate thinking to not take on all these large projects themselves but enter into contracts with small independents.

I think that the Government of Saskatchewan has the will for economic diversification. I think they want to create

new jobs. We don't have the money to do it, but the private sector certainly does. And I think we can enter into new partnerships that will create our electrical future needs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to again talk about government spending restraint. As I said earlier, our government has reduced its expenditures. We have tried very, very hard to bring expenditures in our government under control.

And I just want to, for a moment, talk about how we as MLAs and cabinet ministers have tried to reduce our own government largess. Mr. Speaker, I am proud that the cabinet in this province decided to take a 5 per cent salary cut to show the people of this province that they meant business. I am proud, Mr. Speaker, that we no longer have legislative secretaries. They have been eliminated. Under the former government, I think there was only one or two people on this side of the House that wasn't in cabinet or didn't have a legislative secretary position with a \$7,000 per year amount of money attached to it. We have the smallest cabinet in 20 years. And all of these things, Mr. Speaker, have saved the taxpayers of this province \$1.4 million.

Mr. Speaker, allowances for extra duties by members of the legislature have been reduced. MLA communication allowances have been cut by 25 per cent. And if constituents don't get three or four news-letters per year from MLAs, there's a reason. We have cut back on our communication expenditures.

All out-of-scope public service salaries have been frozen. And, Mr. Speaker, I think in some cases some of those salaries should be cut back. Some of the senior civil servants in this province, from my point of view, are earning too much money. There are people who have taken salary reductions in the private sector. There are people who don't have jobs. They have seen their full-time work go to part-time work. And I think that anybody who earns 80 or \$90,000 a year in this province doesn't need to earn that kind of money, and I'm not afraid to put those views on the public record.

Mr. Speaker, we have also seen department and advertising budgets cut by 29 per cent. We've also eliminated over 40 boards and commissions, and we have eliminated over 500 government appointments. And I think there's more work to be done in that area.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have cut Crown corporation car allowances by some 50 per cent. I can assure the people of Saskatchewan there'll be no more Lexuses anywhere in the Crown corporations or government.

Mr. Speaker, we have also decided to down-size government. We have seen the Department of Social Services consolidate all employment and training programs to eliminate duplication.

The Family Foundation has been eliminated, and its functions have been absorbed into other departments. The communications policy division unit in the Department of Education has been eliminated, and Crown corporations have been directed to reduce operating costs. The Farm Ownership Board and Farm

Land Security Board have been merged to reduce administrative costs. And funding available to physicians has been reduced.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, we have reduced expenditures by 344 million, but it's just a beginning. More waste and mismanagement will be eliminated as governments review their operations and as citizens identify ways for government to reduce government spending.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are many other people in this legislature who want to respond to the budget, and I want to give them an opportunity to do so. I can assure the taxpayers of this province that this government is on the road. We've been derailed a few times, Mr. Speaker. We will make mistakes; we are only human. But we're not unlike any other family in this province.

If a family is in a position where they lose . . . a certain member of the family loses their job, sometimes you have to cut back. You've only got a limited amount of money. Sometimes you do things that you don't want to do. If you're unemployed and your children have piano lessons or they take skating or they go to hockey and you have to pay, sometimes when you don't have a job you can't afford to do those things any more, but it's important to the growth of that child.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not unlike an unemployed citizen. This government essentially has no money. We have done things we haven't wanted to do. But we're going to continue to do the kinds of things we have to do in order to get our government finances under control, back on the rails, so that we can begin the new tomorrow that our government and our Premier talked about during the October 21, 1992 election.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — We know that there are lots of citizens in this province that aren't happy, but you elected us to make choices. And we may have made some wrong choices, but we had the courage to make choices. We will continue to make choices, Mr. Speaker, but we have some more time between now and the next budget.

The new budget process will begin in June of this year. Our next budget will come into this legislature probably in March of 1993. We will be consulting the public. We will consult, Mr. Speaker. It was difficult to consult in the past six months because of the kinds of constraints we were under. But, Mr. Speaker, we will be consulting the public in the next year. We want their input into our budget, our second budget. We know that the road ahead will not be easy, but we have the courage, and we have the commitment, and we have the fortitude to forge on because the new tomorrow is around the corner. I firmly believe that, and our government believes that, and our Premier believes that, Mr. Speaker.

And I just want to ensure the public that we will do what we have to do in the fairest way humanly possible. Thank you very much.

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

(1500)

**Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, a few days ago I had the honour of moving the acceptance of the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, and today I'm pleased to speak briefly in support of the budget speech.

I want to first of all compliment the Minister of Finance and the Associate Minister of Finance. I think they've done a very excellent job in very trying circumstances.

The throne speech was very visionary. The budget speech is hard-nosed and practical, and the throne speech I think offers a lot of hope. The budget shows determination, and the throne speech provides the blueprint for this government's term, while now again the budget provides the building materials.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the budget completes the public presentation of this government's plan — its plan for recovery and its plan for restoration.

The throne speech stated that we would bring back common sense and competency to the managing of our finances. It promised that we would provide open, honest and accountable government. It said we would protect the disadvantaged and renew our spirit of co-operation and our spirit of community. And I add, Mr. Speaker, we intend to restore courage and leadership to the operations of this government.

I applaud and I admire the Minister of Finance for having the courage to deal with reality in his budget. This budget shows leadership by conviction, not followship after polling.

Governments are elected to govern in tough times as well as in good. The Minister of Finance and the Premier are leading.

Mr. Speaker, my southern neighbour, the member from The Battlefords, spoke very eloquently on the reason why tough decisions have to be made. He reminded us not only are Tory times tough times, they remain tough for some time — not a great deal unlike the odour of a well-known animal remains.

So no need to go into detail here after their financial mismanagement, their yearly deficits, regular as the swallows coming back to Capistrano. No need for overkill.

The Associate Minister of Finance said that the Tories' motto seemed to be, let's make a deal. It doesn't matter if the price was right; just let's make a deal. If you were a Tory or a Tory friend, it was come on down; let's make a deal.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there is one thing about the Tory whining about this budget that does amuse me: it's another example of the colossal inconsistency.

During the election, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition went all over the province saying, where's your plan? Where's the plan? He had none himself, except to run another series of deficits, so he asked for

ours. Where's the plan? Where's the plan? A good line, maybe, except it didn't fool anyone.

Now though, Mr. Speaker, they've changed their tune. Now that we brought down this tough budget they're running around saying, we're breaking all the promises we supposedly didn't make during the election — we're breaking the promises that we supposedly didn't make during the election. I can't hardly believe it. It's the same clear, concise thinking they demonstrated in government.

I also noticed, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Thunder Creek keeps repeating the Tory line that we knew that they knew that their budget figures were cooked so we shouldn't have been surprised. Boy, it'd be nice to be a Tory and not have to worry about what comes out of your mouth.

My good friend and colleague from Saskatoon Sutherland-University said that the former government acted like irresponsible spenders. He said, use your Bay card to pay your Sears card to pay your MasterCard. That was his comparison, Mr. Speaker. He forgot to add that when you run out of money you put it on your Tory card — your Tory card, Mr. Speaker. This card is accepted internationally and you can just keep right on charging. And charge they did.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the opposition Finance and jump-rope critic accused us of cooking the books. Can you believe that? He said that we added charges to the Tory debt that need not accrue to the budget. We have thereby inflated the deficit by over one-half a billion dollars, he said. If, Mr. Speaker, if the member from Thunder Creek were right — and he's not — that would mean that the Tory deficit is only really thirteen and a half billion dollars, not 14. Is he bragging that their deficit's only thirteen and a half billion dollars? To which I can only say, good grief.

Mr. Speaker, for 12 years I've been involved in the management of credit unions, so I do know something about finances, something about the accumulated effects, the often disastrous effects, of accumulated debt. But like many other people, I have trouble wrapping my mind around that figure without breaking those figures down — \$14 billion of dead weight, yearly interest payments of \$757 million to the people of Saskatchewan.

I did some calculations, Mr. Speaker, to break that down. That works out to \$2.082 million per day of interest. Broken down even further that's \$86,757 an hour, or, Mr. Speaker, \$1,446 per minute, for every minute that I'm standing here. That's the amount the former premier spent on a European hotel room. I like to take some pride in knowing that this speech will be worth, by the time I'm finished, will be worth about \$25,000.

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

**Mr. Sonntag:** — On the deficit. That's the size of the beast that we're attacking, and its scary, Mr. Speaker. But no one ever said putting our finances in order would be easy.

Mr. Speaker, in my throne speech address I talked about what I think are the roots of our party — how they go back to the Saskatchewan tradition of co-operation and of sharing, of banding together to confront both a hostile environment and the large, entrenched interest from outside of the province. I said then, and I believe even more now, Mr. Speaker, that part of that tradition has led Saskatchewan people to the belief that government is their instrument, their tool to further their struggle against the larger elements, Mr. Speaker.

On the other hand, Tories, right wing governments of all types, think that government is their enemy for some reason, Mr. Speaker. An article recently in *The New Yorker* magazine stated that:

... for the past decade the whole ideological structure of American "conservatism" has depended on the constant, relentless reiteration of the claim that all government is necessarily evil. The Bush Administration has come to depend for its continued political existence on successfully turning American minds against any conception of the state as the guarantor of the common welfare, and has managed to make even the most conventional arguments for social compassion sound like the entering wedge of totalitarianism.

That's the philosophy of the previous administration, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, if government is the enemy, what do you do? You plunder it if you manage to get a hold of it. You rip it off, as do many of the Tory friends like George Hill. You mortally wound it by running up massive deficits, to cripple its effectiveness — government by the scorched earth policy, Tory governments.

Mr. Speaker, I want to again refer to my colleague from Saskatoon Sutherland-University. He spoke of the tough times, how we have to cut back in our life-style, how we have to start eating hamburger instead of steak and lobster. We have to start eating what we can afford. Well I'd like to add one thing to that, Mr. Speaker: not like the Tories who talked boloney and ate steak.

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

**Mr. Sonntag:** — There are many, many positive aspects of this budget, and one of the ones that I want to highlight and one that affects my constituency in Meadow Lake very much, Mr. Speaker — it's the announcements made by the Minister of Social Services. We're going to see funding for child hunger programs rise by 35 per cent. We're going to see additional funding for child care centres. The overall social assistance budget was increased by more than \$9 million this year to begin the government's attack on poverty.

And I'd like to quote from the minister, if I could. She says that the increases are targeted to help recipients most in need — persons who are disabled and those living in the North. All these changes will take effect August 1, 1992. And all of these are initiatives, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very, very proud of.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend an olive branch to the opposition — some sense of hope for the members opposite. My father, who has been a CCF (Co-operation Commonwealth Federation) NDP member all of his life, Mr. Speaker, says that before he dies he's going to give up his membership and buy a PC (Progressive Conservative) membership. His reason, Mr. Speaker, is that he just can't stand to see a good New Democrat die.

So there is some hope, Mr. Speaker, not just for the members opposite but for all the people of Saskatchewan. And I want to give my assurance that I will be voting in favour of the budget. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and enter into the debate on the budget speech.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend our minister, our Finance minister, in his preparation and delivery of his budget. This exercise of building the budget was a horrendous undertaking. To take a province's financial mess and put it into a workable plan has indeed taken a great deal of planning, consultation, and discussion.

As a member of the government caucus and someone who has had some first-hand experience in preparing budgets and designing budgets, certainly at a much lesser magnitude, I have some appreciation for the tasks and the work that has been put behind us.

Our province's future is now ahead of us and this New Democratic government has a recipe that has many different ingredients in it. And some of those ingredients, Mr. Speaker, are going to be bitter and they're going to have a bitter taste. But we all know that this budget is viewed as bringing short-term pain, but for the future we will have long-term gain and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend my appreciation to the people of the province, and particularly the members of my constituency in Yorkton who attended the pre-budget meetings with the Finance minister, and on many separate occasions, with me.

Getting involved in shaping what the future of this province would be for us was an exercise I very much appreciate having an opportunity to participate in. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that that will be the practice of our government in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I am also personally pleased with the final product of our budget for several reasons. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that was not designed and prepared by a handful of politicians or by a collection of bureaucrats, but is a budget that had the full participation of the government caucus, members of the public, public consultation, and departmental involvement.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this budget looks at the fundamental aspects of our campaign strategy of October of 1991, which was to get the Saskatchewan financial house in order and to get the province back on the rails again.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, our budget takes into account the basic principles of our New Democratic government, which is to make those difficult, tough choices in a caring, compassionate, and fair manner.

Without a doubt, and confirmed by the many telephone calls and personal contacts I have had in my office in Yorkton, my home, and here at the legislature, this is a difficult budget and has made some very, very tough choices. But I believe that the tough choices is what our government was elected to make and what the people of Saskatchewan asked for when they said that they wanted a fair and accountable process. And this budget clearly reflects those guidelines.

Mr. Speaker, a New Democratic government will put people first. We will continue to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Funding for the child hunger program increased in our budget by 35 per cent. The Saskatchewan tax credit increased by 25 per cent. And \$20 million more are being provided for programs like those to deal with family violence; our government's commitment, Mr. Speaker, to eliminate hunger and poverty in this province that is known to be the bread-basket of the world. That's our first priority, Mr. Speaker — people first.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, in an attempt to get a handle on our staggering provincial debt left to us by the previous Tory administration, the throne speech and this budget have prepared the foundation and begun the construction in rebuilding Saskatchewan. We have opened the books of this province for total public disclosure and accountability. And we are already implementing several recommendations of the Gass Commission. A government of its word and a government in action.

We have cut millions of dollars in waste and mismanagement. We have scaled the decks with an amalgamation of government departments and reduced administrative structures. Tough decisions, Mr. Speaker, but necessary to reshape our future and that of our children.

We are leading by example by cutting cabinet ministers' salaries and reducing communication allowances for MLAs; almost 40 boards and commissions dissolved or reduced, eliminating some 500 government appoints. Operating expenses of the government will be reduced by 3 per cent where the past Tory administration's grew by 6 per cent annually. Out-of-scope salary ranges have been frozen. Advertising budgets, Mr. Speaker, have been slashed by 29 per cent in all government departments. Crown corporation car expenses have been cut by 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago, shortly after the Finance minister's budget announcement, the Conference Board of Canada chairman stated on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio that other provinces could look at Saskatchewan as a model in their trek to get a hold of their financial deficit budgeting, further adding that the Saskatchewan budget of 1992 was a good start on

the road of turning this province, Saskatchewan's dismal financial picture, on to a new channel — a renewed confidence, Mr. Speaker, in the economic and financial status of our province, the sign of new confidence in the province.

Mr. Speaker, in making the difficult choices, our government has indicated our commitment to stimulate the economy. As a government and certainly as a member representing the fifth largest city in Saskatchewan and having the third-largest retail sector in the province, I recognize and appreciate the role and value of small business and our community . . . small-business community in our province. The initiative to assist small business through the reduction of the small-business tax is a welcomed initiative, and by the elimination of the PST (provincial sales tax) on October 21, and the demise of the PST, as well welcomed by the retail community in our area and district.

Furthermore our government's commitment to create thousands of jobs through our Crown corporations, which will see capital and environmental projects, summer student employment, and new housing initiatives, are further positive steps in this budget, Mr. Speaker, in rebuilding Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our government has stayed the course in protecting rural Saskatchewan and keeping the farm families on the farm. We have established the six-year lease back program for farmers who have transferred land to lenders. We have developed the voluntary debt mediation process that allows lenders and farmers to resolve difficulties in the early stages.

Mr. Speaker, we have examined alternate forms of financing, such as community-based land trusts. And, Mr. Speaker, we have spent \$208 million . . . almost 80 per cent of the agricultural budget will go directly or indirectly into farm support programs in this province.

Mr. Speaker, 14.8 million to support research and development of new agricultural industry and opportunities; and \$1.6 million, Mr. Speaker, for continued support for ethanol development.

This, Mr. Speaker, is truly a budget aimed at keeping Saskatchewan farm families on their farms. And I know that through these initiatives and future work and consultations with the federal government, farmers and farm organizations, we will succeed in bringing to a halt the statistic of some 15,000 farmers who have lost their livelihoods and their farms, as was the case during the 10 years of Tory administration in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Tories say that they were the friends of the farmers, creating 15,000 farm casualties. Some friends, I say, Mr. Speaker — some friends.

Mr. Speaker, our province is in the transition, and we're going to have some change, some major change, because this is what the people of Saskatchewan have requested. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan, contrary to the words the member from Estevan made yesterday, were in fact fed up and disillusioned with politics and politicians, with him and with the Tories.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, there was an attempt by the member from Estevan to place our budget deficit of 1992 at \$517 million in a light where it created major pain with no gain. He cited, Mr. Speaker, almost all of his annual deficits of the 10 years, except for the one for 1991-92, which looks like will come in somewhere about 880 to \$900 million as per debts.

Mr. Speaker, this is our stepping-stone. That's from where this government begins. That's where the NDP story for the future begins. Mr. Speaker, in just six short months we were able to reduce the 1991-92 deficit by \$150 million. As well, we have come in under budget with some \$350 million less than the Tory deficit of 1991-92. Those, Mr. Speaker, are the facts.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I fully realized as a rookie MLA, the true meaning of deceit as I observed the member opposite make statements that are truly contrary to the facts of this province. Mr. Speaker, it is precisely that kind of action, that behaviour and those theatrics, that give politicians the label of being dishonest, dishonourable, and deceitful. But I state unequivocally and without hesitation that that was Tory politics and I know we will never encroach the valued principles of our government and certainly will not encroach the values of this member from Yorkton.

To say, Mr. Speaker, that the 1991-92 deficit is \$265 million, after telling us in this House for the past week and a half that we knew, that they knew that it was much greater; and that Gass reported in mid-February that the debt was in excess of 800 million; and to have the member blatantly insist that the debt of 1991-92 is \$265 million is most deceitful and I suggest, Mr. Speaker, is politics in its most distasteful form.

Mr. Speaker, for the opposition to attack our government and accuse us of lacking compassion to people because of the lay-offs and the cut-backs which are related specifically to the debt of this province that they left for us is truly an unbelievable statement for the members opposite to be making, coming from a previous administration that was totally and completely oblivious to the sensitivity of people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, what about those 400 dental nurses their government corralled in the Saskatchewan Hotel at 9 a.m. one morning and 20 minutes later told them that they were out of a job? Not just insensitive, Mr. Speaker, but inhumane.

And what about the brown box brigade that went around the province and gave people three hours time to pack their desks and clear out while the custodians stood by, watching a 20-year civil servant pack his desk so they didn't steal any government property and told they were fired but never got a reason?

That was the Tory way of treating people, Mr. Speaker.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have the audacity and the gall to stand there and pretend that they even understand the meaning of the word compassion. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, true political hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker, the Tories spent our money. They drove the people out of the province. They sold our assets. And you created our debt which will take us years to climb out.

But, Mr. Speaker, an NDP government turned this province around twice before and, Mr. Speaker, we're going to do it again.

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

**Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, this budget of 1992 is our first attempt to clean up the mess and the hypocrisy of the past. It's not going to be easy, but the blueprint is clear. To the people of Saskatchewan, we've already opened the books, and they're going to see open, fair, and accountable government.

We are, Mr. Speaker, a people's party, and we will consult, and we will work together in implementing new policies and change. And we are going to make some mistakes, Mr. Speaker, along the way, and we're going to ask that the people of Saskatchewan assist us and understand, because Saskatchewan is our community and together we're going to rebuild it with the values of compassion and fairness.

Mr. Speaker, today I am very pleased to be a part of the government and support the approval of the government budget of 1992. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina North West . . . pardon me, Regina Albert North.

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be honoured to represent either of the two above-named constituencies, but of course I'm intensely proud of the constituency I reside in, that being Regina Albert North, and I'm also proud of my colleague, the member from Regina North West, for his representation in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the budget of 1992. And I do so with some mixed feelings, frankly. It's doubtful that any of us on either side of the legislature, any of the people in the public did not have certain criticisms of this budget. It's doubtful that anybody in Saskatchewan has not heard somebody that would have done something different if they were the Minister of Finance.

And I think that's safe to say, that were any other individual the minister, they would have made some minor changes. Some would have perhaps chosen to not raise taxes, to not deal with the problems of the province. Some would have chosen to put the blinders on, as the former government did for nine and a half years, and say, well if we see no evil, if we hear no evil, and if we speak no evil, there will be no evil.

And of course that may work in stories, in Alice in Wonderland, that sort of thing, but it's not the economic reality and it's certainly not the reality for Saskatchewan — my province, our province — as we head through the decade of the '90s and prepare for the turn of the century,

a turn of the century that will bring new hope. I think there's new hope in Saskatchewan before that, but this budget, Mr. Speaker, is the start of that new hope.

But before you can improve where you're at . . . or improve your situation, you must recognize where it is you're at. And the government of the day, headed by the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, the Premier, the first thing we did was promise we would be opening the books. And what did we do? We set up the Gass Commission and opened the books.

(1530)

Much squawking from former government members as those books were opened and revealed a litany, day after day after day of misspending, day after day after day of waste, day after day after day of things that ministers should have known about — in all likelihood did know of many of those things — and chose to see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. Thus they chose to ignore the reality of Saskatchewan.

They chose to ignore the problems, and because of that, they're relegated to a small minority in opposition. And we have what I would only describe as a large majority in government, with a mandate to not only open up the books and find out where it is we're at, but to implement a blueprint to improve our province, to give some hope for our children and our children's children.

Because we're at a crossroads. We're at a time when we can either choose to straighten out Saskatchewan's fiscal mess, we can either deal with that in a realistic fashion, come to grips with it now, or we can risk foreclosure, we can risk no longer having any ability to borrow money to continue to sustain a life-style that tax revenues just don't support.

If we do that, what the ramifications are, is perhaps it would be next year, perhaps it would be the year after that, it might even be a couple of years after that when government pay cheques start to bounce. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that teachers and health care professionals, I know farmers, I know other people — there's thousands of people work at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, my former employer — all of the above may not forgive us for increasing their taxes. For that, I'm regretful. For that, I hope they can understand what it is we're trying to do. But they may not forgive us for tax increases.

They may not forgive us. Certainly there's every reason to suspect that a significant number of the 300-plus people that were fired will not forgive us. We've asked them to pay the ultimate price as we try and grapple with the mess we've inherited — the ultimate prices, that of loss of job. They may not forgive us, and for that I am truly sorry.

But I know one thing. All of the people that I mentioned above will not forgive us if government pay cheques start to bounce. And in February of any given year, we have to tell teachers you can please teach for the rest of the year, but we're sorry we can't pay you. And we say to doctors and nurses and chiropractors and all others in the health care field, well it's nice, the service you're giving is wonderful and we're asking you to continue it but we

have no ability to pay you.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — I'd like to ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, a group of 166 students from Holy Cross School in Prince Albert. I understand that they're supposed to be in the west gallery, but given the number I'm almost sure that they're sitting in your gallery as well. And as the member from Carlton said: that's a lot of chocolate milk. We'll be meeting for drinks and questions in a few minutes, and I'm certainly looking forward to that.

Mr. Speaker, they're accompanied by a number of people. Maurice Chalifour, Simone Robinson, Sister Verley, Colette Matheson, Henriette Joubert, Reg Doucette, Yvonne Pelletier, Judy Kuling, Les Mewis, Reina McBeth, Pat Winsor, and Lorne Ashby. I ask all members to join with me in giving them a warm welcome to the legislature.

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

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Mr. Speaker, with your permission or permission of the House, I would like to add my words of welcome to the students from Prince Albert.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The students that are here today are residents of both . . . they are residents from Prince Albert Carlton and residents from Prince Albert Northcote constituency. We're really glad to see you down here students, and you can thank your teachers for arranging this and we wish you all a safe journey home.

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

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a lot of chocolate milk for my colleagues from P.A. to purchase. Mr. Speaker, the hundred-and-some students from Prince Albert and the chaperons required to keep them in order just fit the bill for what I was explaining.

Can you imagine in the middle of a school term telling the teachers we no longer have a pay cheque for them, but will you please see this year through? And the same could be said, if we had not undertaken what we have with this budget, if we had chosen to ignore the fiscal reality, the same could be said not only for schools, but for hospitals, for highways, for every service that the Government of Saskatchewan is involved with financially. No money.

And the threat is there. The threat is real.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I speak in favour of this budget. I am delighted that the Minister of Finance consulted as widely as he did. I am delighted that we had as much opportunity as we did for input into the budget before it was actually presented. All that input as you know, was not without some price. But the fact is, at the end of the day we have a budget that is as compassionate and as fair and as equitable as is humanly possible in the province of Saskatchewan in 1992.

There are choices in this budget that nobody, nobody would want to make, but choices that had to be made now or risk losing everything — hard choices made in a firm, compassionate, fair-handed manner by a government that is firm, fair, compassionate, and consultative.

Mr. Speaker, the reality we discovered through the Gass Commission and through the Provincial Auditor's report and when we opened the books, the reality we discovered is we have an operating debt in Saskatchewan, a provincial budgetary deficit of \$8.1 billion; add to that a Crown corporation debt of \$5.1 billion; add to that a further \$1.8 billion in loan guarantees — all of which are new loan guarantees, new in the last decade to operations such as Weyerhaeuser and Saskferco and the list goes on — you come up with a grand total of \$15 billion debt, \$15 billion debt.

Now by itself \$15 billion doesn't mean a whole lot, but what was the debt a decade ago? What was the debt when the Conservative government took office in April, 1982? The answer is: in the operating budget — which now has an \$8.1 billion deficit as I mentioned before — there was actually not a deficit but a surplus of \$136 million. Surplus — \$136 million. The wizards across the way, the now opposition, magically transformed \$136 million surplus into an \$8.1 billion dead-weight debt.

Crown corporations now have a debt of \$5.1 billion. Crown corporations, when the wizards across the way were in government, when they formed the government the Crown debt was \$3.2 billion total. That includes SaskPower, SaskTel, all of the Crown corporations, Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. All the debt totalled \$3.2 billion; it's now \$5.1 billion.

And I have to ask myself, what have we got to show for the additional nearly \$2 billion debt in the Crown sector? Well let's see. Sask Forest Products is no longer a Crown. Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan is no longer a Crown. Saskoil was sold. SMDC (Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation) gone. Sask Minerals gone.

How in the world can anybody sell off so massively, sell off assets, and lose money while they're doing it? It's absurd. But the absurdity is, all of us in Saskatchewan have to now pay the price. All of us do because . . . It's like, if I can liken it to a errant son that takes over a farm. The parents give the farm to the son and say: here's our farm. We've worked 35 or 40 years to build up this operation. It's now running real well. We're ready to retire. We've set aside enough money that we can look after ourselves. You look after the farm.

And the farmer, the young son decides, oh I've got a taste for the wild life — spends his days and most of his nights in the beer parlour. And after a year the son says: gee, the farm didn't make me any money, but I've still got my taxes to pay. I've still got bills to pay. So the son sells a quarter section of land.

Well that works for one year. Spends the next year . . . Perhaps on holidays this year. He found the errantness of spending all his time in the beer parlour. So he takes a holiday and goes to Hawaii for a month or two. And at the end of the day, at the end of the year, gee, the bills are still coming in; gee, the farm income isn't there. Well they'd better sell another quarter section of land. Only what's changed is land prices have slid and there's nobody willing to buy the land at what it's worth, so they pay a lower price.

But now this new farmer is a price-taker, not a price-namer, so the land gets sold cheap and this process just rolls on and on and on. Imagine the same story repeated over a 10-year cycle, and that's exactly what has happened with the people of Saskatchewan. We've had a 10-year cycle of selling off our assets for ever decreasing amounts of money, and now we're left collectively paying the bill.

Fifteen billion dollars debt now in 1992 when in 1982, a decade ago, when the former Conservative government took office, there was a total of \$3.2 billion debt — nearly five times the debt in 10 years. And importantly, Mr. Speaker, in that 10 years they weren't buying assets or building up the assets of the people of Saskatchewan. They were selling off the assets at fire-sale prices.

And now we're left with the 1992 budget where the best thing a government could do was make choices, hard choices in many cases, choices that no government would want to make — but choices that are designed to save our province and to provide a future for our children, a province that has opportunity, a province that will again move forward.

Mr. Speaker, we have been recognized, this budget. *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday, May 9, headline: "Province still trend-setter, this time fighting debt." And there's a picture of the now Minister of Finance and a very flattering column commending the Minister of Finance for recognizing what is the biggest problem in Saskatchewan right now and dealing with it.

*Leader-Post* headline: "Minister takes long-range view." Again May 9. And as I've just been trying to point out, this is a long-range view budget. This is a budget born out of despair, but with a long-range look into the future, with a look at helping Saskatchewan people that need help the most.

(1545)

I can't help but agree with my colleague, the member for Yorkton, who not long ago just before I took my place in the legislature was referring to the now Leader of the Opposition's remarks of the other day in this Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I thought those remarks were

particularly absurd when I heard them. I thought somehow the logic was still lacking. It's been lacking for quite some time, but the logic was still lacking in that the argument that I heard was, we were snookered by the civil servants with this budget.

And I want to tell you that that is why the former government got into trouble right from day one. Saskatchewan, when they took office in 1982, Saskatchewan had the finest civil service in Canada — the finest in Canada. And they didn't believe in it. They thought they were being snookered. They get good advice from the finest civil servants in Canada, and they chose to ignore it. At every turn, they laid the blame on the bureaucrats. They laid the blame on the civil servants.

The civil servants that have worked . . . many of them put a lifetime into building this province into making our government run, into making it efficient, into providing opportunities not only for themselves, not only for their children, but for their neighbours, for their communities, and for our entire province. And yet we have the former Leader of the Opposition ranting and raving about us being snookered by the civil servants in this budget. That's part of why we're where we are today.

We had an administration that refused to take advice, that refused to take professional, competent advice. In fact at every turn they refused to take any good advice, so we're stuck with what's left.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the civil service was a very professional civil service. There is still a civil service full of the finest people in the world. We have got an excellent civil service, one that needs to be encouraged rather than told they're snookering the people of Saskatchewan — telling us they're snookering the government of the day when no such thing is happening, when we're getting good advice, not only from civil servants, we're getting good advice from the people of Saskatchewan. I'm getting good advice from my constituents, and I'm following through with that advice wherever I can.

Mr. Speaker, this budget . . . I want to turn to health care and I want to say that we were listening. I have here a publication put out by Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union and they say no to premiums, no to health care premiums. They say some things that, had we introduced premiums, frankly are not terribly flattering to the government.

But we listened, not just to RWDSU, we listened to our constituents, we listened to the people of Saskatchewan. I continue to travel the province. I continue to talk to people all across the province, and I'm delighted to say that we're able to act on some of the things . . . some of that advice. We're certainly able to hear it. We act when we can.

This budget, Mr. Speaker . . . And one of the things that I regret us having to do but we had to, was the changes in the prescription drug plan. But there's a couple of things I want to say about that. One is that families that are the heaviest users, if I may describe it that, of prescription drugs, that the doctors prescribe the most drugs for . . . And remember there's a reason when prescription drugs

are prescribed. I'm not trying to cast blame on anybody. If you have a health problem that prescription drugs help, it's the doctor's job to prescribe it and your job to take those prescription drugs.

Families who spend more than \$940 a year on prescription drugs under the old plan are now better off under the new plan. Families that spend more than \$940 per year are better off because under the new plan, after a family has spent \$750 on prescription drugs, the co-payment drops to 10 per cent. So that for every dollar worth of prescription drugs you need you pay a dime, or for every hundred dollars you pay \$10.

That's the first thing I wanted to say about the prescription drug plan. The second thing, Mr. Speaker, is fundamentally why prescription drug costs are escalating. And I have a *Star-Phoenix* report. This story originated in Ottawa but it's May 13, 1992. "Prescription drug costs on the rise" is the headline.

The average cost of a prescription has soared nearly four times faster than Ottawa and drug companies claim, says a new study by one of Canada's largest drug plan operators.

The report by Green Shield Prepaid Services, which runs drug plans for companies such as Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, found that the cost rose an average of (get this) 11.4 per cent a year between 1987 and 1991 (11.4 per cent each year in a four-year period).

The Patented Medicines Prices Review Board, the government watchdog, said in its latest report that the price of patented brand-name medicines increased an average of 3.1 per cent a year between 1987 and 1990.

Ottawa increased (and this is why) . . . Ottawa increased patent protection in 1987 for brand-name drug companies . . .

It was a controversial move at the time. It was a move that the New Democratic Party, I know as an opposition MLA then in Saskatchewan, I spoke about this. And I know our federal counterparts in Ottawa were decrying this very move, and exactly what we said was going to come to pass has in fact happened. That move respecting prescription drugs was a move that was linked to the Canada-U.S. free trade deal.

And what the new patent drug Act or the new in 1987 patent drug Act did, is it's limited the ability of generic or no-name drug manufacturers to turn out lower cost copies of prescription drugs. So there's more patent protection on brand-name drugs and fewer generic drugs to keep costs down.

We said at the time it was going to result in disastrous increases in medicine costs. Proof is in the pudding — 11.4 per cent increase per year for four years. It's a 45 per cent, roughly, increase in the cost of prescription drugs in one four-year time frame. Is it small wonder that a government that is teetering and trying to keep ourselves and our province from the brink of insolvency, is it any

wonder we have to deal with our own prescription drug plan now? Of course it's not.

I want to, dealing with health care, deal one more thing with health care and that's respecting the abortion question, the whole matter of choice, Mr. Speaker. What we have, and we saw it earlier today in question period, we saw a now opposition decrying that the government of the day has its hands tied respecting de-insuring abortions from our health care plan. There's legal reasons, there's Acts that would be violated, it's unconstitutional, it goes against the Canada health plan, it's against the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. That's just three minor pieces of legislation that tell us that we could not de-insure abortions even if we wanted to.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the members opposite, if it is that simple, as they now claim it is, where in the world were they for nine and a half years while they were the government, a Conservative government in Saskatchewan, and we had a Conservative government in Ottawa for the same period of time, much of the same period of time. Where were they? If it requires a legislative change, great. Where were they? If it's a provincial matter, great.

You were the government. Why didn't you act? If it's a federal matter, great. Talk to your Prime Minister, your kissing cousin in Ottawa who's still Prime Minister despite the lowest popular opinion ratings of any prime minister in Canadian history, alive or dead.

I mean, if it's a federal matter, talk to your federal cousins. If it was a provincial matter, why did you dither for nine and a half years? And now you're decrying, oh gee, the NDP isn't moving. I tell you we are moving. I'm very proud of the ministerial statement that the Minister of Health made yesterday where she addressed the cause of unwanted pregnancies and where there's a commitment to deal with the cause in a hope that by preventing unwanted pregnancies we may reduce the need for abortion.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of this budget for a couple of things. Before I take my place, I just want to say that what this budget did is provided protection for those in our province least able to protect themselves. We have seen, for instance, a basic allowance for a single employable person increased by \$55 a month; childless couple, basic allowance increased by \$90 a month; single parent with one child, increased \$110 a month. I mean, this is pretty remarkable stuff in an area where rates were depressed for far too long.

We have tried to deal with hunger in a meaningful way. Children are hungry, Mr. Speaker, because of a lack of money. Nobody with \$5 in their pocket would choose to go hungry. They would spend the \$5 on food.

This government has dealt with the matter of income redistribution, protecting the poorest, protecting those least able to protect themselves. This government has also done things for injured workers. We have a Workers' Compensation Act review that is going to be delivering its final report some time in August or September. There is already some limited improvement in the way The

Workers' Compensation Act is enumerated. There will be more improvements in the future.

We have a government that has increased its tree planting program. I notice that the budget has gone up in tree planting and in forestry, up to one and a half million dollars this year. It's going to result in more trees being planted, and of course trees to be planted require people to plant them.

Mr. Speaker, we've addressed jobs. There are areas of job creation that my colleagues have spoken about, so I'm not going to bore the Legislative Assembly with further talk of it.

But before I close, I want to again address the former premier, now Leader of the Opposition's comments of yesterday. And just briefly. I don't want to start tackling some of the things he said in that that's just a disagreement between two members.

(1600)

But I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was driving home last night after the legislature adjourned and I was angry. I was frustrated and I was bitter about the corruption of truth that was taking place. I was frustrated to no end. And I thought, you know, this kind of reminds me about my 15-year-old dog. Lucky will beg for any scrap of food. She is absolutely shameless — absolutely shameless. And if you refuse to pet her, she'll nuzzle up and get your attention. She is absolutely shameless. And, Mr. Speaker, that was the type of an act we saw by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. Absolutely shameless. No thought to truth or reality — nothing.

Mr. Speaker, as I take my place I just want to again say how proud I am of a budget that was introduced out of despair, a budget of hope and future, a budget that is going to see Saskatchewan through this decade and get us started on the proper road to financial fiscal success, and a budget that sets us on the road to much better things in the future. Thank you.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — I've been meeting and talking to my constituents since the budget came out last week and they have many concerns — many grave concerns. The concern that tops the list is that the NDP government is going to destroy this province. People are more than unhappy, Mr. Speaker. They're downright miserable. About the only good government thing that they're happy about is that they have a Progressive Conservative MLA.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — They can say they didn't believe the NDP during the election. They can say I told you so to those who elected this government. They can say, Mr. Speaker, don't blame me — I didn't vote for them. Unfortunately, they still have to pay for the utility rate increases and the tax hikes.

The farmers in my constituency still have to take the hit on the NDP's elimination of the tax exemption on fuel. They

have to live with a \$900 rebate which is just a fraction of what they put out for the hike in fuel costs. They will still have to pay for the changes in GRIP. They will have to pay despite the fact that they were not consulted on the changes to this program.

Despite that, the changes to GRIP are in courts. Despite that they want to stick to the 1991 GRIP, they have no choice. The NDP budget hurts the farmers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It hurts everyone in Saskatchewan. The NDP are spreading the misery equally among all the people.

The NDP continually state that it is necessary to do away with harmonization. They claim it was detrimental. They say they had to scrap harmonization for bookstores and restaurants. They say if they wouldn't have scrapped harmonization, it would have cost Saskatchewan 7,000 jobs. They could not show how or where these jobs would be lost. They just said it would be so.

The Minister of Finance claims he had a report proving this. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance ducks the issue of producing a similar report for his government's increased taxes. He wouldn't even answer our questions on whether there was a report in existence. We can be certain there was such a report. And, Mr. Speaker, we are certain that the reason the Minister of Finance won't produce it is because of its contents. The contents of that report will show the devastating effects of the NDP budget on Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, imagine how many jobs will be lost because of this NDP budget. Just imagine how many jobs will be lost if harmonization would have lost 7,000. Tax increases in this budget are not the only concern, Mr. Speaker. It distresses me greatly when I hear of some of the proposals to cut funding to education.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you are a true supporter of the educational system. Your support for education is well documented. When in opposition, Mr. Speaker, one of the opposition members stated that the former administration was underfunding education to the point where the president of the University of Regina had to go out and beg for money.

The NDP opposition repeatedly asked why the previous administration didn't give education a higher priority for our young people, for their future, so that our young people could have access to a higher education to ensure them a guaranteed future in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our youth are very important. Their future is Saskatchewan's future. My children are still young, but in a few years they may wish to attend a university. When that happens it would be nice to still have a university for them and their peers to attend — a university to attend which is affordable for them and their parents.

However, Mr. Speaker, the reality is the current government is cutting funding to the universities — cuts of 2 per cent in each of the next two years. These are real cuts of 2 per cent off of last year's budget; 2 per cent and no allowance for the institutional rate of inflation which would amount to about 7 per cent total decrease in

funding; cuts which translate into a 13 per cent increase in tuition fees, cuts to staff, to programs, and a 2 per cent drop in funding to university services.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the university system Saskatchewan people were advocating and working for. These cuts are not just to universities, but they are also to the elementary and high school system — the K to 12 system.

The NDP government was looking at proposals to eliminate rural schools and rural school boards. Mr. Speaker, the children in some rural areas are already making long bus rides to get to their schools. If those schools are closed, it will mean even longer bus rides. Mr. Speaker, no one wants young children to be forced to ride school buses in the wee hours of the morning or to return home in the dark on cold winter nights.

The member from Riversdale has talked of the federal government off-loading costs onto the provinces. Just what does he think is happening when his government cuts grants to school boards across this province? The school boards cut back; they eliminate programs and staff. Mr. Speaker, they also raise taxes — taxes to continue the needed programs they can still afford.

Mr. Speaker, this is off-loading by the province; off-loading by the NDP government onto the local taxpayers of the school unit districts; off-loading onto the local municipalities, both rural and urban. Local tax increases across this province because of grant cuts to provincial school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Riversdale promised to support the teachers and to maintain education. In fact, he stated in the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald*, February 19, 1988, and I quote: Don't let any government tell you they don't have enough funds for education; the money is there.

Mr. Speaker, when is the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan going to make good on his promises? When are the members of the Premier's government going to hold his feet to the fire and make him fulfil the promises that were made while he and his colleagues were in opposition?

The member for Saskatoon Riversdale knew the state of our economy. He may not have believed his own rhetoric as to how bad things were, but he knew. Mr. Speaker, a quote comes to mind when thinking of the NDP Party and their claim of not knowing the state of the province's financial affairs. John F. Kennedy said: When we got into office, the thing that surprised me most was to find that things were just as bad as we'd been saying they were.

Mr. Speaker, the government — a government which from most of their remarks recently is still making the transition from opposition to government, or perhaps I should say from opposition to opposition — this government while in opposition stated that there was enough money to run the government except for waste and mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, either there was less waste and

mismanagement than was implied or the present government is involved in even more waste and mismanagement, because they are both increasing taxes and cutting programs.

Tax increases in the form of utility rates. These are tax increases which we must all pay, whether we have the ability to pay or not. We have to heat our homes, we have to pay our phone bills, we have to pay the power bills, we have to pay more for fuel. And now we have to pay 8 per cent E&H (education and health).

Mr. Speaker, we now have to pay to see an optometrist. We have to pay to see a chiropractor. Families in this province now have to pay a \$380 deductible for the drug prescription plan — over 200 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker.

Diabetics now have to pay for all their supplies. The NDP have increased the cost to diabetics for insulin. They now have to pay \$23 a vial when they used to pay \$1 under the old plan.

Mr. Speaker, how will families cope if any of their members are diabetic? It will be extremely hard, Mr. Speaker. I feel for them. I just wish that you on that side of the House would feel for these people as well. Mr. Speaker, our low income families and our seniors will suffer greatly from this NDP budget.

Speaking of seniors, Mr. Speaker, Prairie Villa Senior Complex recently opened in Redvers. The member for Weyburn was there as the government representative and I must say he did a fine job. Unfortunately that member will not get many more opportunities to open such facilities. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has put a moratorium on such capital projects. I guess you could say that they have been eliminated by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, are the pioneers of this province not to get any older for the next four years — for the next four years — until the people of Saskatchewan again have an opportunity to replace the government in this province?

Another capital project which is currently under way in our constituency, but which would not have proceeded under the current administration is the construction of a new hospital in Oxbow. This facility replaces an older unit which was not capable of handling the long-term care needs of our community's seniors.

The new facility is an integrated facility providing both acute care and long-term care for levels 3 and 4 patients. I look forward to the opportunity of joining the member from the government in opening this facility.

Speaking of capital projects, Mr. Speaker, let me say a few words about the Rafferty-Alameda project. Mr. Speaker, the member from Indian Head-Wolseley certainly has spoken on this issue. Mr. Speaker, if you talk to most of the people in my constituency they would agree that this was an excellent project. They applaud it.

It may have gone over budget, Mr. Speaker, but I think once again the people of my constituency would agree

that the cost overruns can be directly attributed to the member from Indian Head-Wolseley and his cohorts in their fight to prevent the development and completion of this project.

This project has been involved in litigation almost from the start, which greatly added to the costs. In not one of those court actions was the Government of Saskatchewan found to be wrong. The Rafferty-Alameda boondoggle that the member spoke of is his responsibility. The member from Indian Head-Wolseley can take full responsibility for those added costs.

I have requested that the minister responsible for SaskPower and Souris Basin Development provide me with the total sum of money spent to fight these court cases. I have asked this of the minister in February during a committee meeting for Crown corporations. As of yet I have not received their reply.

(1615)

The member from Indian Head-Wolseley was concerned about water or the lack of water in the reservoirs at the Alameda and Rafferty sites. Mr. Speaker, Alameda had a water depth of 35 feet last summer. There was abnormally high run-offs last year and in this spring's melt. There was no water saved from this spring's run-off. I ask, Mr. Speaker, why?

The member from Indian Head-Wolseley talks of the structure not being sound. The Alameda dam, Mr. Speaker, is an earthen structure. Earth settles and compacts over time. This was expected and was taken into account. To use this as an example of a boondoggle is simply a red herring, a red herring from the reds.

Mr. Speaker, I was also very disturbed to hear that the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation is censoring their employees in word, thought, and deed. Why, Mr. Speaker? Are the politicians trying to prevent crop insurance agents from providing their clients with the full range of information? Mr. Speaker, are they saying that no government employee or person receiving income from the government can speak out against any government program or action?

Under this NDP ruling, would it have been fair for the previous government to have fired all those SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) employees who stormed the legislature and spoke out against Fair Share? Why are you instructing and demanding that your agents push the market price option in crop insurance? Why are the agents not simply allowed to explain the various options and the pros and cons of each?

The choice of option should be left to the farmer. He will make the choice that best suits his particular operation, not the choice that best suits the financial status of the Crop Insurance Corporation or of the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Agriculture and a group of supporters went to Ottawa last fall seeking money from the federal government. The Minister of Agriculture has just visited Edmonton and met with the Agriculture ministers from

across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I ask, where is the money? All we received from the Minister of Agriculture was a bill for his expensive trips, but no money. The minister speaks of the need for the federal government to meet its responsibilities in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, farmers across Saskatchewan in the last two weeks received a payment from the federal government for the FSAM-2 (farm support adjustment measures) program. All we have received from this Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Rural Development is increased premiums in crop insurance and GRIP and decreased coverage.

Mr. Speaker, on a recent trip to Nipawin I had an opportunity to discuss with farmers in that area their concerns about the '92 GRIP program. Their concerns, Mr. Speaker, were no different than those of the farmers in southern Saskatchewan. They were concerned about decreased coverage in cases of crop failure, drought, disease, or frost.

Mr. Speaker, farmers across Saskatchewan need to be given a choice between GRIP 1991 and GRIP 1992. If the GRIP 1992 is such a great program, farmers across Saskatchewan will choose it. If however that is not the case, farmers will choose GRIP 1991.

Mr. Speaker, the agricultural producers of Saskatchewan must be allowed to make that choice for themselves and not be dictated to by the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers are having a tough enough time with it as it is. On top of the increased premiums for GRIP, they now must contend with the elimination of their fuel tax exemption. They must now contend with the fact that they do not have a tank for purple gas. Will the government be providing funds to the farmers if they do not have a separate tank for clear fuel and purple? Not likely, Mr. Speaker. Because once elected they have forgotten about the farm family strife.

The member from Regina Albert North spoke of farmers taking holidays in Hawaii. I would like to tell the member that very few farmers in my constituency take holidays, let alone holidays in Hawaii. And, Mr. Speaker, while they're not gone on holidays they also do not spend the majority of their time in the local bar.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers of Saskatchewan do not have the money to take holidays or to sit in the bar. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, why rural hotels are having such a difficult time. People in rural Saskatchewan no longer have the funds necessary to be able to frequent their local watering hole.

One of the other issues that came up when I was visiting in Nipawin, Mr. Speaker, was the FeedGAP (feed grain adjustment program) program. Farmers there were very concerned that this program remain in place.

Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association presented a news release, and it talks about the FeedGAP program and its \$13 a tonne that the farmers were receiving from

this program. And I would like to quote from Brian Perkins, president of the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association:

"FeedGAP served as an offset to the Western Grain Transportation Act. It stimulated the feeding industry, which in turn strengthened the demand to keep cattle in the province to be fed. A removal of FeedGAP and the introduction of interest on the livestock cash advance will cost a producer feeding a 600 pound calf to finish \$30 per (a) head."

Mr. Speaker, that \$30 represents the total profit, the total return to most producers in this province. Without that \$30, without the FeedGAP program, there will not be cattle, there will not be hogs fed in this province.

One producer last week, after the budget came out, told me that he had plans for a major expansion of his hog operation, and he's now cancelling it. He would have employed seven people there, Mr. Speaker, and those jobs are gone; they will never be there. That was one producer, Mr. Speaker, and there are many more producers across this province which were in similar situations. The hog operations will not proceed, the cattle operations will not proceed, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, they will slowly decrease.

Packing plants in Manitoba, when Manitoba took their FeedGAP program out, ceased to exist. They no longer have a packing industry in Manitoba because they no longer have a feeding industry in Manitoba. The animals that would normally have been fed in Manitoba, go some place else. And, Mr. Speaker, the animals which would be fed in Saskatchewan will now go to Alberta or they will go across the line and go to Nebraska or Colorado to be fed.

So rather than using Saskatchewan grain, providing jobs for Saskatchewan people, those animals will now be eating grain from Alberta or from the U.S. (United States) and providing jobs in those jurisdictions. And, Mr. Speaker, we lose across the board. We lose the income on which would be taxed for the corporations doing it or the farmers, and we lose the taxes which would have been collected on the wages.

Another quote from Brian Perkins, that these changes would mean that Saskatchewan producers would be \$4.09 less competitive per head than producers in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are too intent on fighting the deficit that they have continued to bloat since they became in office. The Finance minister is too worried about his reputation for presenting balanced budgets to worry about the hurt of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, the NDP have imposed the greatest tax grab in the history of this province on the people of Saskatchewan. They have hacked and slashed at spending and increased taxes across the board.

In the budget you have made some changes related to border communities. You are allowing legal gambling in hotels along the U.S. border. And this is good. Something

needs to be done to assist those businesses. However what you gave with one hand, you took away twice as much with the other.

Gambling is only one of the reasons why Saskatchewan people travel south across the U.S. border. They also travel south for cheaper liquor, cheaper cigarettes, and cheaper gasoline. While taxes were not increased on liquor, you have increased the price of draft beer which is sold only in hotels. So while hotels may get customers who are interested in gambling, you are helping to drive away the customers who would like a glass of draft now and then.

You are also forcing more people across the border by increasing the taxes on tobacco and gasoline, and an increase in the sales tax from 7 to 8 per cent. When people go across the border they don't just pick up a case of beer, they also fill their cars with cheaper gasoline, which in some cases is produced and refined in Saskatchewan.

So while you are helping a little bit along the border, in the overall scheme of things, you have increased the rate at which Saskatchewan people head south for cheaper goods — cheaper goods to avoid paying provincial taxes, the net result of which is that even less money for provincial coffers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the minister reconsider the imposition of increased tobacco and gasoline taxes along the border. I also ask that he take a look at the amount of liquor tax charged at the border.

Mr. Speaker, to raise the taxes collected at customs will do little to solve the problem. All that increasing taxation at ports of entry will do is encourage more smuggling or encourage Saskatchewan residents to use ports of entry in Manitoba or Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, instead of coming up with an economic agenda to create wealth and create jobs, the NDP have left it solely in the hands of the business sector. They claim to have created 2,000 jobs in Saskatchewan with this budget. Yet, Mr. Speaker, they will not say where. I assume that these jobs are probably all of their patronage appointments in the civil service.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government hollered wolf many times while in opposition. They hollered that the government was creating an unsupportable deficit, but that they were also underfunding all programs. What did we get in this budget? We got a \$517 million deficit — \$517 million more onto the debt. But the government also increased the operating side of government by a hundred million dollars. Since they are increasing funding, why are they cutting important programs?

Mr. Speaker, how can the government justify funding abortions while no longer providing support for diabetics? The Charter of Rights calls for medical procedures to be available and accessible. It doesn't say who pays.

What is in this budget, Mr. Speaker? Nothing good. Only broken promises, broken dreams, and the NDP's

specialty, broken contracts.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will prove to be disastrous for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere hope that enough people stay in this province to ensure that this NDP government is defeated in four years time. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Jess:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in the budget debate. As the representative of Redberry constituency, I would just like to compliment the Minister of Finance and the cabinet for a job well done.

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

(1630)

**Mr. Jess:** — Well done, considering the mess that was left by the Tories. The budget of last week was of course the main point of discussion in the legislature as well as on coffee row this week.

Our government is undertaking a horrendous task, and that task is to deal with a provincial debt of some 14 billion. On occasion we hear the comment that we should refrain from criticizing the former government for what they did to this province over the last 10 years.

Well I for one would like nothing better than to forget all about the devastation. However, we have over \$2 million a day each and every day, 365 days of the year, of interest before we can put \$1 into the programs for the people. It is a tough budget. Just let's not forget who put us in this position.

Who was really tough on the people of this province? I received some calls of concern on the budget. I would just like to thank those people for their understanding because in most cases people would say, we know you were left a mess and it has to be dealt with.

Just as a point of interest, the increased sales tax and the surtax on income tax combined will create \$125 million in revenue. The harmonized PST would have grabbed 440 million from Saskatchewan, nearly three and a half times as much of a drain on the people of Saskatchewan.

The recent rains have stimulated new optimism in the farming community. Saskatchewan is once again coming to life, not only cultivated land being worked and pastures greening up, but alive with a sense of community, a sense of community that has awakened with the new government.

Saskatchewan has in its history three times had a government faced with a massive debt to control. Twice it has managed to pull things together. The first time was when the T.C. Douglas and his government took over in 1944. The second time Saskatchewan was rescued in 1971 by Allan Blakeney. Now for the third time, Roy Romanow and his government have been asked . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. The member should be referring to another member by his constituency and not by his

name.

**Mr. Jess:** — Now for the third time, the minister from Riversdale and his government have been asked to clean up the mess. It will take some time, but with responsible government to provide proper management decisions, once again Saskatchewan will become a good place to live.

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

**Mr. Jess:** — This week I also heard from an ambitious group of individuals in the Meota area that are interested in a community-based business. Dozens of new, small, specialized businesses are showing an interest in starting up in the improved climate for small business in Saskatchewan.

One of the main reasons for optimism is the return to responsible government. Responsible government in today's situation means short-term pain for long-term gain. That's why some taxes increase and some cuts in programs are necessary, if hard to take.

Some of the changes that I believe are good for Saskatchewan and its people are: 40 government boards and commissions that have been eliminated, corporation capital tax levied on financial institution rises to three and a quarter from 3 per cent and the capital surcharge on large resource companies, up to 3 per cent from 2 per cent. Saskatchewan saving bonds will be on sale in June. Video lotteries will be set up in bars and lounges.

Child hunger program funding is up 35 per cent; child tax reduction increase by 25 per cent. Child care centre grant are up 21 per cent. Home care funding is up 20 per cent to \$38 million. This is a very important step in the wellness program.

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

**Mr. Jess:** — Four million dollars will go to northern communities. Northern food allowances have doubled to \$50 per month. How much more we could do, or to quote the former government: how much more we could be if we didn't have to pay that \$760 million in deficit interest each and every year.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to address the sad financial state that the Tories left the Crown Investments Corporation in. As the members of this House are well aware, the CIC is the holding company for Saskatchewan Crown corporations. Its purpose is to give direction and overall guidance to our Crowns.

But nine and a half years of PC waste, mismanagement, and senseless privatization has left our Crown corporations sector in devastation. As a result, the CIC has been left with an accumulated deficit of \$584 million. Blind ideology and utter incompetence have driven our once proud public sector into the ground.

Mr. Speaker, the origins of the CIC's accumulated deficit can be traced back to privatization initiatives such as the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and Cameco. Blame can also be placed on accumulated operating

losses in poor investments such as NewGrade Energy Inc. and GigaText.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we must not forget how the Tories worked to undermine the profitability of our Crowns. Utility rates charged by Saskatchewan Power were frozen when there was a great need for an increase. The plans of Saskatchewan Government Insurance for expansion into life insurance were stopped. SaskTel's monopoly on the ownership of telephones was abolished. And before the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan was privatized, the Tories forced the corporation to stay in the stifling market organization Canpotex.

Mr. Speaker, the privatization, investment decisions, and the mismanagement of Saskatchewan's Crowns pursued by the PC Party either demonstrate an ineptitude thus far not seen or a malicious attempt to cripple the province's public sector for the sake of Conservative ideology.

Mr. Speaker, the former PC government milked the CIC in order to make its deficits look worse than they actually were, if you can believe that. The payment of these dividends have stripped the corporation of its retained earnings, in effect leaving no cushion for the CIC to absorb the impact of future losses, never mind the possibility of future dividend payments.

Privatization of profitable Crowns have done much to eliminate the transfers of dividends to the CIC. This, the poor investment decisions and the mismanagement of the public sector, have left the people of Saskatchewan a debt-financed asset portfolio that currently generates little or no income.

Mr. Speaker, the CIC lost over 600 million in 1991 alone. This was partly due to the \$160 million loss on Cameco shares, a \$64 million write down on the Bi-Provincial upgrader, and a \$50 million grant to the Meadow Lake pulp mill.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we identified 875 million in non-recoverable debt. This debt can be attributed to the PCs' privatization loss, dividends paid to the province, SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) losses, STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) losses, GigaText losses, etc.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will restore the financial health of the CIC. We will cancel the 584 million of equity and advances currently owed by the CIC, the Consolidated Fund, in order to allow the corporation to restore its ability to provide future dividends to the province.

We will convert the \$875 million of non-recoverable debt into equity advances. These necessary measures will add 93 million to the '92-93 deficit. Mr. Speaker, the Consolidated Fund will provide the CIC with an annual net subsidy to offset the CIC's interest costs and losses from investment and Crown corporations in excess of dividends received from the Crown corporations.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we will implement recommendations from the Gass Commission — recommendations to provide a high level of public accountability. Audited financial statements of the CIC

will be presented to the Assembly for scrutiny each and every year. We will design and implement long-term strategy and capital plans for the Crown corporation sector. Mr. Speaker, rest assured that this New Democratic government will restore the province's public sector to its previous proud stature.

Mr. Speaker, I have dealt mainly with the CIC, a very important issue. I could say much, much more on this subject. However, with this I close my remarks. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget.

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

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and support the budget today. This budget is fiscally responsible, accountable, fair, and yes, Mr. Speaker, compassionate. Because things could have been a great deal worse than it is because the budget genuinely reflects on people's ability to pay.

I believe that we have taken a rattlesnake, Mr. Speaker, by the tail and we've managed to start a long way down the road of taming it. It's not going to be easy, and we never thought it would be. But we have faced reality and we've got on with doing what has to be done. And that's more than I can say for the Tories who got us into this mess, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I also believe we still have a lot of ground to cover. A lot of issues need to be addressed and a lot of explanation has to be offered to the people of Saskatchewan. Oh we need not worry about the explanation we have to offer to the people of Saskatchewan about what we are doing, because I feel that we are doing the very best that we can, faced with the troublesome odds, the odds left to us by the terrible Tories — the Tory destroyers.

We have explanations to make to the people of Saskatchewan to let them know loudly and clearly why we are in the financial mess we are in, and why we are facing some of the desperate times that we are facing. We have a massive deficit, health care concerns, social service concerns. And that's the truth, Mr. Speaker.

(1645)

And that also reminds me of a quote from the well-known Emily Dickinson. And I quote, Mr. Speaker: Truth is a rare thing, and it is delightful to tell it. I would almost agree with her, Mr. Speaker. Truth is indeed a rare thing, and in most cases it is delightful to tell it. But in others, such as with the deficit facing us, the truth is painful. But it is the unadulterated truth — the former government's mismanagement, fabrications, and bad deals. And the list goes on, and I want to make that point over and over again, Mr. Speaker.

We are in the mess we are in because the members sitting over there in opposition, where they belong, Mr. Speaker. And it's only a great pity that they weren't sent to opposition sooner than October 21. The Tories tried to scuttle the ship of Saskatchewan, and they nearly succeeded.

Ideally, if the Tories had any sense at all, they would have taken a page out of the book of the ancient philosopher Zeno who said: We have two ears but only one mouth so that we may listen more and talk less. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Tories indeed have two ears to hear, but the trouble is they had too many mouths, and all of them were speaking at once and speaking more and listening less to the people.

Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that we have the answers, and those answers lie in the people of this fine province. I'm going to largely focus my remarks on the agriculture area, Mr. Speaker, because at heart, Ron Harper, farmer from Pelly, farming is my blood and is in my heart and my soul. I believe in what we, our farmers, have to offer this province. I believe that we have faced tough times and we'll face tough times in the future, but I also believe that together, collectively, we can make a difference.

We will turn the farm crisis around, Mr. Speaker. We make living by what we get, Mr. Speaker, but we make life by what we give. We make life of others by what we give as well. We need to remember this, Mr. Speaker, when we are forming programs that are designed for our farm communities. I believe that way because I know from personal experience that farmers are doers.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, farmers are the backbone of our economy. They know that they have the answers to what is facing them. After all, who better knows a problem than those who face it daily? They know what they need to make it in this day and age, in the '90s.

So make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, the '90s are challenging. The '90s have meant changes far beyond proportion than we have faced before. The '90s signify sudden fluctuations in markets we once thought we could count on. The '90s mean uncertain future when we go out to make decisions about farming the land. These decisions are critical to the well-being of our province.

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

**Mr. Harper:** — They are critical to the well-being of our farmers, of their families, about to head into another crop year. As I stand here, Mr. Speaker, seeding has started in my constituency and many parts of the province. Soil is being turned over, prospects are being assessed, decisions about farm gate management is being made for another year.

But I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope, and the hope lies in several directions. Hope lies in the fact that there are several important incentives being undertaken in agriculture to stimulate the economic growth — new jobs, new wealth through the development and application of new technology, new markets, new products, and increased value added activity.

Our incentives include \$14.8 million for research and development and new industrial opportunities including strategic research programs at the University of Saskatchewan and Crop Development Centre at the university. Support for other research organizations such

as Ag-West Biotech, and funding for individual research development and demonstration projects; 1.6 million in continued support for ethanol development at Lanigan and Kerrobert; \$848,000 in support of the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute at Humboldt; \$1.795 million in continued funding for livestock, dairy, horticulture, crop development activity that will create new jobs and new job opportunities and other spin-offs for our farmers and our rural communities; \$320,000 in continued funding for the federal government farm management incentives.

And there is more good news in this budget, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps would go unnoticed if we didn't make an effort to speak out on what we have achieved that is positive.

Our good news includes maintenance of the laboratory services; no reduction to support of veterinarian and dairy laboratories in Regina and the Veterinary College in Saskatoon; \$56,000 in the establishment of a departmental plant diagnostic laboratory in Regina as a year-round operation; \$1.578 million in the maintenance of brand licensing, registration, livestock manifest, livestock protection, and livestock inspection programs; \$292,000 in continued support for the 4-H; \$250,000 in increased funding for the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation. These contributions will be matched by the council and matched again by the CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency). And that means a quarter of a million dollars contribution by the province will generate \$1 million of international agricultural aid.

Hope lies too with the real-life, full-time farmer who is out there in the field right now cursing at the unpredicted elements, praying for moisture and begging the powers to be to do something about the prices of grain and oilseed.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the people. We have heard their calls for fairness. We have brought in a budget that will address their concerns both in the short- and the long-term. We have heard the people. We have heard their dismay over the deficit the Tories saddled us with, have heard their demands to do something, have heard and have listened because after all that is what this legislature is all about — the people — people like you and I who farm the land and people like you and I who work making a living the best way we know how.

This legislature, Mr. Speaker, is the heart of this province where the voice of the people is heard, where the voice of the people — farmers, teachers, Indians, children, our pioneers — are listened to, are counted on because they lived in the day-to-day world dealing with the hard realities.

Dealing with life's hard realities also means facing diversity and adversity, blending them together to create a partnership. For that is what we want, Mr. Speaker. We want a partnership with the people of this province — a partnership with the NDP government and the people working together to right the financial mess left to us by the Tories; an NDP government and the people working together to make sense out of the deceptive numbers the Tories threw at us in the dying days of their regime. The

people have the Tories' number, and that's quite obvious that their number is insignificant judging by the size of the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

But the point, Mr. Speaker, is the people didn't truly have a partnership arrangement with the previous government. That's what we are here for. We are here to begin to forge . . . or no, Mr. Speaker, to revive the spirit of co-operation that once flourished here in Saskatchewan.

We are here to begin to forge new bonds with people, bonds that will allow us to work together as a team. After all, that's what a partnership is really all about, Mr. Speaker, a team of each of its members helping the other.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to rebuild Saskatchewan, and do it together.

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

**Mr. Harper:** — I know right now, Mr. Speaker, that things look rather grim. GRIP is a problem, and I wouldn't say otherwise. The 1991 GRIP program, Mr. Speaker, was a bad program. And now that we've been able to implement some changes within that program, the 1992 GRIP program is a lot better bad program.

But, Mr. Speaker, the GRIP program never was and never should be considered as the answer. And many of our farmers and many of the farmers that I've talked to in my constituency can remember very well ago, just a little better than a year ago now, Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Mazankowski, our then federal minister of Agriculture, went to the media and told our farmers: Mr. Farmer, if you don't join the GRIP program and do something to protect yourself, you won't qualify for a third line of defence.

Well over a year has gone by, Mr. Speaker, and the farmers in Pelly constituency well remember that promise made by Mazankowski, our then federal minister of Agriculture, and that promise hasn't been kept. The federal government hasn't kept their commitment to the third line of defence. And, Mr. Speaker, we here in this province demand that they do keep that commitment.

And while GRIP may represent some of the most significant agricultural program legislation that's been brought forth in the last 50 years, the design of the 1991 GRIP program unmistakably was a bad program, thanks to the Tories. It had the potential of creating market distortions and major negative impacts on our economic efficiency. Even the department of agriculture and economics at the University of Saskatchewan recognized that.

In March we changed GRIP to address some of these problem concerns. The program is now market responsive. There has been other enhancements since March, including added coverage protection for drought prone areas, and the extension of the GRIP deadline until May 15, 1992.

I do know that we've gone the extra mile to make the program as workable as we could. But to be blunt, Mr. Speaker, the federal government didn't give us a lot of manoeuvring room. In fact they've done nothing but

shuck and jibe us ever since this whole thing started.

The federal government doesn't give two hoots about Saskatchewan farmers, Mr. Speaker. If they did, they wouldn't have spent the last few months creating such anxiety and confusion that our farmers don't know if they can put this seed in the ground this year or not. The federal government doesn't give two hoots about Saskatchewan farmers. If they did, they would do something to live up to their commitment of a third line of defence, Mr. Speaker.

The province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, does care about our farmers. We are demanding the federal government live up to its promises and demanding that they do what is right. But you know, Mr. Speaker, I wonder sometimes how much of what we and the people of Saskatchewan and Canada are saying to the Tories, provincially and federally, is really heard. I know they listen over there in opposition, Mr. Speaker, but I wonder . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. It now being 5 o'clock, I do leave this chair until 7 o'clock this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.