

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of petitions to table today which were sent to us intersessionally, concerning the closure of rural hospitals. I won't read through them, Mr. Speaker, but just mention that they are from all over the province and these people felt it was very important that their expression be heard in the legislature. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Clerk: — The following petitions are presented and laid upon the Table: by Ms. Murray for a private Bill of Aldersgate College of the city of Moose Jaw, in the province of Saskatchewan; by Mr. Neudorf for a private Bill of the Bethany Bible Institute of the town of Hepburn, in the province of Saskatchewan.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order, the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7), they are hereby read and received:

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate full coverage and universal access to chiropractic treatment.

And

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate the farm fuel rebate program.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Thursday ask the government the following question:

Regarding the government's management of video gaming: has the government in any of its manifestations engaged in business contact or dealings with Video Lottery Consultants Incorporated of Montana?

And I also give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I shall on Thursday ask the government the following question:

Regarding the government's management of video gaming: has the government in any of its manifestations purchased, leased, or otherwise obtained interest in video lottery terminals; and if so, from whom was the interest obtained, at

what cost, by what authority, and under what terms and conditions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Thursday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Social Services: (1) how many children were forced to use government sponsored or supported child hunger programs in the last year; (2) how many meals were served; (3) how much did the government pay to support these child hunger projects; and (4) how many non-governmental agencies are involved?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct honour and pleasure this day to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues, members of the Legislative Assembly, a young public servant for a day, seated in your gallery. The young public servant is Kara who attends Michael Riffel High School in the constituency of Regina Albert North. Kara Stonechild is taking part in the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, Regina chapter's fourth annual "Young Public Servant for a Day" event.

Seated next to Kara is her mentor for the day, Mr. Robert Cosman, our Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk. Kara has been spending the morning and will spend the early part of the afternoon with Mr. Cosman, seeing what goes on in the Legislative Assembly.

This event, Mr. Speaker, is very popular with both the students and the public service mentors because the students get a chance to gain an appreciation of the value of public service, but the public servants also get a chance to strut their stuff and show off what it is that we're all about here.

Indeed I had a brief opportunity to speak with Kara earlier this day and she tells me she's interested in entering public life. I asked her if it was from an elected or a more normal civil service perspective and Kara told me it was from an elected perspective, which makes me a tad bit nervous because as the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Regina Albert North, I think there might be some competition there that I couldn't easily fend off.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I ask you and others to join me in welcoming Kara Stonechild to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Carlson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly a friend and neighbour of mine from years gone by, at least a neighbour from years gone by, Blair

Wotherspoon who is a . . . and his family were friends and neighbours of ours back on the farm at Melville, and I'd just like all of the members of the Assembly to welcome you here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you and members of this Assembly a long-time friend and colleague of mine who worked in the Department of Social Services with me and is currently writing a book as well as doing some research work on the history of Batoche. Seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Terrie Prince. Ask you and members of this Assembly to welcome Terrie to the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Impact of Tax Increases

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of this week we will see the fruition of an 18-month political campaign, an intensive PR (public relations), media, and political exercise to lay the blame for the betrayal of promises the NDP (New Democratic Party) members made during nine years in opposition.

Every person in this province, Mr. Speaker, remembers the Premier's remarks that he could run this province with revenues of \$4.5 billion. No new taxes, was the message. And you know what, Mr. Speaker, the people believed the Premier.

Mr. Premier, you have raised the PST (provincial sales tax) to 8 per cent. You have raised income taxes — personal income taxes — by 10 per cent. You have raised every utility rate — power, gas, telephone, insurance. You've raised every government fee that people thought possible and have even found some new ones to raise. Mr. Premier, you are now telling everyone to get ready for more taxes. This, after saying 4.5 billion was enough. My question, Mr. Premier: has your government done any studies, any analysis of the impact on Saskatchewan of what your massive tax grab has done, and let alone what effect your new round of taxes will have this Thursday? Will you do that, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance and the government of course tries its very best to get the best information available to it in the preparation of a budget, which is the only prudent and proper thing to do. And in these circumstances, no doubt there have been a number of internal and other examinations of the data which have been carried out.

I point out to the hon. member opposite that the situation fiscally is serious, but that we have turned the

corner beginning with the budget of last year. And we think that the budget on Thursday will be in effect a confirmation that we have finally changed the direction of the 1980s, a direction which is marked by huge, extravagant expenditures of government, and waste and mismanagement, and that there is more hope for the people of Saskatchewan after the budget and in the months and years that follow from that, because the light that they will see will be not a train but that of the daylight of opportunity under a new government in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, I'm not surprised that you and your government have been and will continue to keep Saskatchewan taxpayers in the dark about economic issues. Mr. Premier, when you go about taxing people, don't you think it would be kind of handy if you knew ahead of time that you maybe were doing more harm than good.

Mr. David Perry of the Canadian Tax Foundation I think has put it right on the money when he said taxpayers are facing a real brick wall when it comes to increasing taxes.

I think people like Mr. Perry have done some honest-to-goodness research, Mr. Premier. My question: Mr. Premier, you can leave the rhetoric to your NDP Party functions. The question requires an answer. Has your government, your Department of Finance, your Department of Economic Development, have you done some analyses on what your taxes will have in the way of changes to the inflation rate, interest rates, and the decreasing population of our province? And if you have them, sir, would you please table them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the answer that I've given to the hon. member is the same one that I give to this second question. Quite obviously the Department of Finance and the government has taken into account all the data which is available, and taking that into consideration in the preparation of the budget on Thursday.

As the hon. member will know, and if he doesn't I simply remind him again, there is some hope that the economy is turning around, not only on my part but on the part of external experts such as the Conference Board of Canada who predict a growth of 3.2 per cent, and other agencies, all of which indicate that we have turned the corner from 1991.

There's no doubt about it that the question of taxes is something which this government . . . no government likes to do. But the reality is that the mountain of debt which has been piled up by you, sir, and by your colleague, the member from Estevan, the predecessor of this office, the highest debt of any province in the history of Canada — a debt of \$1 billion new debt each and every year from 1982 to 1991 — has made

the task of getting a proper budget turn-around and economic development difficult and challenging.

But you know something, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, we are up to it, and I think Thursday's budget will prove to you that we are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, that litany is beginning to sound like a broken record to Saskatchewan taxpayers. I guess that's not much of a surprise to anyone out there, Mr. Premier, that's paying those taxes, because you have broken the record for broken promises in this province.

Mr. Premier, it might interest you that you have done studies on the effect of increased taxes. As a matter of fact you did three of them — three studies on the effects of increased taxes on the Saskatchewan economy. The only problem was that they were done in 1991 while you were in opposition, sir. And they were done about tax harmonization.

Mr. Premier, surely with the resources of your party caucus, your 18-member cabinet, a large Executive Council staff, and the departments of Finance and Economic Development, that you would have put together a report on the effect that your tax increases would have on Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Premier, I ask you once again, share with Saskatchewan taxpayers and table that report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again I say to the hon. member opposite who simply refuses . . . and if I were him I would be doing the same thing. Denial I think is one of the most important psychological aspects that the Conservative Party can certainly engage in now. And the small band or group that you have left can deny, deny, deny all that you want.

But the reality is that what we promised to set out in this program card, it was to open the books and to restore sound fiscal management to the province, which is what we have done. We tabled the study on the PST. I have said to the member already that we've done the best analysis that we can internally in the preparation of the budget. I think the budget is going to be fair and is going to be fair and is going to be a complete one which will both stimulate economic development and do what is imperative — say to the people of Saskatchewan: we have finally, completely turned the corner, put an end to those days of waste and mismanagement and misplaced deals and misplaced priorities, and get this province moving again. Join us in that task of building. End your career of destruction of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, question to the Premier. I would take from that response, Mr. Premier,

that you don't particularly want to talk about the things that you said in January of 1990, the goods and services tax in Saskatchewan by the New Democratic Party caucus; tax fairness for the '90s, Saskatchewan New Democratic Party caucus, January '91; the provincial GST (goods and services tax) and its impact on Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan New Democratic Party caucus, April of '91.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in there the now Premier and his economic analysis unit over there were talking about how the provincial government has continued to underfund Saskatchewan hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and universities. It has recently announced a reduction in provincial funding for rural municipalities of more than 500 villages, towns, and cities. That represents a provincial government tax shift and a back-door tax increase on the backs of local property taxpayers. Sounds kind of familiar, I would think, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Premier, in opposition you had the wherewithal to get together three fairly large studies on impacts on increased taxes to the taxpayers, to their villages and towns and the people in them. Why today in government after 16 months, can't you share with Saskatchewan people the analysis of your tax increases on their backs right now, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, it is true that we did a very good job in opposition, a responsible job . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And I thank the hon. member for rather belatedly acknowledging that, rather belatedly acknowledging that, because I full well remember all those billboards. I think the former premier will remember them. Remember how they were? Millions of dollars of billboards. Roy, Roy, it said, where is your plan? Where is your plan. Where is the studies.

Because we took the position that what we would do is we would open up the books, we'd find out the true position of the debt, and then work from there in a sensible, responsible, pragmatic way. And that's exactly what we did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Now you don't like it. Well I'm sorry that you don't like it. I think the majority of the people in the province of Saskatchewan understand the huge debt and morass that you have placed them into, the strait-jacket that you put them into.

I can only say to you, sir, that this budget is going to be the budget that finally and completely turns the corner and builds or shows the way to build the province of Saskatchewan back to prosperity.

I repeat again. Join the building crew; leave the

wrecking crew.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, you go on to say in the analysis that you did while in opposition, such inflationary effects will erode the real disposable income of Saskatchewan families and consumers, and will therefore put additional economic pressure on Saskatchewan small business and Saskatchewan jobs. During a national and provincial recession that just doesn't make sense.

Well, Mr. Speaker, lots of independent analysis of this government's performance show that the only inflationary fact that the Saskatchewan people have to deal with today is the policies of the member from Riversdale. The only inflationary pressure.

Mr. Premier, given that you said these things in opposition, and that independent sources say that you are the cause of many of these problems, why don't you share some analysis with Saskatchewan people to refute your own words in opposition, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I honestly think the Leader of the Opposition is not listening to my answers. He persists in reading the questions, which I think is not a good habit if the questions don't relate to the previous answer.

I want to say to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition this: that if the leader is referring to the study which we conducted — which I think he is — in opposition, in opposition to harmonization, he can refer to it and I accept it. Because I think that study at that time was right.

I note with some interest that the Conservative Party still persists in harmonization, judging by the undertone of their questioning, notwithstanding their stated words that they're not for the taxation increase. But this apparently is some sort of an attempt to rehash the old election debate of 16 months ago and who was right and who was wrong in harmonization.

I say to you, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, as I take my chair: the independent experts indicate growth in this neighbourhood, as I've said to you in one of my previous questions. It may or may not come about. I don't know. It isn't the greatest growth. I'd like to see more growth. But they know our debt position. They know that we cannot reduce it by totally eliminating programs. They know that we're going to have to have some tax increases. Every responsible economist acknowledges that.

And above all, every responsible, independent, outside economist rejects your position which is, sir, just like that of the Liberal Party — no cut-backs and no taxes and reduce the deficit. And if you can do that, you're better than Merlin the magician.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, maybe you should listen a little more carefully to the questions, because those are the questions, those are the questions of several hundred thousand taxpayers, Mr. Premier.

I mean you were the person that said once you'd eliminated waste and mismanagement, that 4.5 billion was enough. You could run this province, you could run this province, Mr. Premier, by cancelling harmonization; that you didn't need any revenue-generating measures of the '80s because you were smarter. You could do it a better way. You wouldn't have to cut back on health, and education and drive every farmer in this province out of business because you had the answers, sir.

Well, Mr. Premier, you have raised taxes, utility rates, every levy under the sun, including getting divorced and getting married.

Now, Mr. Premier, Don Gass said you knew the economic situation all along. Maybe you can answer this question then, Mr. Premier. Did you say those things to Saskatchewan people only to get elected? Maybe that's the answer you need, Mr. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, whatever the Leader of the Opposition can accuse me of in terms of wanting to get elected, you will never be able to accuse this government or me of telling the people in any one budget year that our deficit is only — and by the way, Mr. Speaker, it sort of winces me to say this — is only 300 million, as they did in 1986 to get elected in 1986, only to come back a few months after being elected to tell the people of Saskatchewan that the debt is not 300 million but \$1.2 billion.

That's what you did. That is an example of saying things to get elected.

And I do remind the Leader of the Opposition, and the former premier, that I wrote to both of them in September, 1991, saying let's have an independent analysis of the books. I got a letter back from your then Minister of Finance, Mr. Hepworth — I've got a copy of the letter here — and he said, don't worry about it, you're just politicking. Our deficit is only 225 million.

It turned out to be just about as accurate as 1986. And when we opened up the books in Gass and the horror story of \$15.5 billion cascaded to the people of Saskatchewan, they knew that it's not this party that says things to get elected. It is that party that says things to get elected and that's why you're sitting as a rump group.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the Premier. It seems, Mr. Speaker, we're getting closer to the truth now. The Premier is starting to talk

about politics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier is starting to talk about politics. And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier that in the absence of his government being able to produce any type of analysis to Saskatchewan taxpayers that shows that there's some validity in the heavy taxation load that he has placed upon Saskatchewan people, that means that we must be only covering up for the Premier's political agenda.

Mr. Premier, part of your analysis said, if this province harmonized, that there would be 7,500 jobs gone and over a billion dollars in economic activity disappeared. Well, Mr. Premier, the truth is that there's 9,000 jobs gone and I would guess there's probably over a billion dollars in economic activity gone because of the tax load and the unfair way that your government is handling Saskatchewan taxpayers. Now that is the truth, Mr. Premier. Why don't you come clean and show us the analysis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says in his closing remarks respecting the question that the tax load is responsible here. I want to tell the hon. member that in our first budget last year we budgeted for a surplus of \$225 million. You know why . . .

An Hon. Member: — I saw 517 million.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Yes. The hon. member said he saw 517 million, and he's right. You know why we ended up at 517 million? Because you subtract the surplus of 225 million from the interest payments on the public debt that you incurred, of \$800 million, and you get a net deficit of \$517 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — It's not the taxes, it's not the taxes. It is the \$760 million each and every year of your taxes which go to New York and to Hong Kong and to Zürich and to London when they should be going to Sturgis and to Preeceville and to Canora and Saskatoon. And they're not, thanks to you. So start telling the truth to the people of Saskatchewan in this regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The hon. member knows that if he wanted to calculate the interest on the 14 billion when he was campaigning, he knew exactly what it was. And at that point, he says we don't need to raise taxes.

He went on and said that we think four and a half billion is enough. And he says tax increases won't be needed to pay for agriculture programs. No new taxes will be imposed. And he went on to say that the

people of this province are fed up with taxes and we're going to change that. And that was in the *Leader-Post* in 1990.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. member and to the Premier is this. You have academics now who disagree with you. Professor Anderson today . . . and they laugh, Mr. Speaker. They laugh at people complaining about taxes. You even have commerce students coming out today saying you don't need to increase taxes to balance the budget.

The students, the professors, and others at the University of Saskatchewan are saying to the hon. member: didn't you promise you could do this without raising taxes? Didn't you say you could do this without raising taxes, without harmonization?

Well today in the paper, and previously in the paper, the academics at the university and the students, Mr. Premier, are saying you don't have to raise taxes to balance the budget in the province of Saskatchewan. In fact, you could actually cut taxes and balance the budget.

Could you show us the analysis, Mr. Premier, of how your research shows that tax increases are going to help balance the budget in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, it's still amazes me that even after defeat the former premier is like the Bourbons — you know, he learns nothing and remembers nothing. And even so, in the context of the newspaper items that he refers to, I've got a copy of that newspaper report as well. It's a mock budget prepared by the university of Commerce students.

And he just got up in his question and he said, he got up on his question and he said, you know, you don't have to increase the taxes. Well the mock budget by this newspaper story does what? It harmonizes the taxation systems, increase the taxes, does away with Crow rate as a method of payment, puts on premiums and user fees. I think it advocates a 10 per cent cut right across the piece in the health care department.

And the hon. former premier gets up and says, it's not a tax. Well, what in the world is it? Is it a balloon? Is it a flying machine?

It's a tax. No wonder we ran up the deficit of \$16 billion with that kind of economic theory.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should take the time to read Professor Anderson's analysis of saying that you not have . . . you can't just raise taxes — you've got to create a tax base. And what the students . . . even the students at the University of Saskatchewan are saying: create a tax base; allow businesses to work and operate here; don't tax them so heavily that they're going to lose. And that's why

they talk about harmonization, creating a tax base.

Would the hon. member, would the Premier, please give us any inkling of research that shows all of his tax increases are going to help Saskatchewan build a tax base better than what the students have recognized here in the province of Saskatchewan today.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to give two parts, if I may, very briefly, to that question by way of an answer.

First of all, Professor Anderson's rather — how shall I describe it? — esoteric economic description of Saskatchewan is interesting to note. When asked specifically by anybody, what would you do, she says, as the former premier says, is create a tax base. How would you do that, the question is. Right. The question is: create a climate, a climate for entrepreneurial skill. In other words, translated another way, the climate is, open for business. Has anyone heard that expression, open for business, before? I tell you, we've had enough of Professor Isabel Anderson's and the member from Estevan's theories about improving the climate, because from 1982 to 1991, "open for business" bankrupted the province and the few multinationals walked away with all the money. That is changed in this election. We're not going to follow that approach.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The second aspect to this question, Mr. Speaker, to sum up very quickly, is I think, important. In this budget on Thursday you will see, among three or four themes, the question of creating a proper business environment and climate. Last year we reduced the small business corporate tax. We have adjusted our taxes with respect to the development with respect to Sears. And there will be other initiatives.

The difference, sir, between you and us is this: whereas you gave the tax breaks and the grants and the unconditional loan guarantees to all of the large multinational corporations, making the choices that that's where the money should go, and not to schools and hospitals, we are reversing that by putting our faith in our entrepreneurs, our communities, our cooperatives, our small-business people, and the people of the province of Saskatchewan. That's the difference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my question goes to the Premier. The problem with your analysis, Mr. Premier, is the rating institutions don't agree with you, the professors don't agree with you, and the students don't agree with you. And I'll tell you for sure, the taxpayers don't agree with you.

Your credit rating has fallen from a AA to BBB with your plan. Your deficit is going up, your taxes are going up, and your credit rating is going down.

What Professor Anderson is simply saying is this. You have to create a base so that you can grow and have the revenue there to finance the kinds of things that you're wanting to do. And you have no economic analysis to prove that you can do that. None.

And today you fail to table in this legislature any plan or any research that shows that you can get the credit rating up and that you can get the deficit under control without these huge, huge tax increases which will wreck our economy.

Mr. Premier, we ask you again on behalf of students, professors, the rating institutions, and taxpayers generally: will you please table your analysis that shows your kind of tax increases won't harm the province of Saskatchewan in its base to creating economic revenue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to make this response to the leader of the . . . the former leader of the Conservative Party, the member from Estevan, very simply as follows.

First of all the question of ratings, again on a factual basis, the former premier is in error, either because he forgets or he purposely wishes to make them in error. There was one drop very shortly after we assumed office in November, 1991 when we had not even introduced a budget, based . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, we hadn't. Because . . . Well the former premier laughs.

You walked out of this legislature in June, 1991 without even passing a budget. We had to get elected in order to pass the budget. And when the rating people did the analysis, they analysed the situation that takes place there. Now that's a fact. And the member can live in denial all that he wants. That's the fact, and the people of Saskatchewan know about it. So we know that's the circumstance.

Having said that, the issue about economic development is very important. But I remind the hon. premier that my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, has tabled a white paper. There have been some modest successes on business attractions here. There have been other benefits which have accrued to the economic sector of the province of Saskatchewan, and much more needs to be done.

The difference between you and us, sir, is this: that we do not believe in fantasy land, we believe in telling the people the truth, and we believe in putting faith in the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would like to remind members in the gallery that they are not to participate in the activities on the floor. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 35 — An Act to amend The Certified Nursing Assistants Act

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that An Act to amend The Certified Nursing Assistants Act 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. 36 — An Act to amend The Registered Nurses Act, 1988

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, I move that An Act to amend The Registered Nurses Act, 1988, 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. 37 — An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984, be now introduced and read a first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION UNDER RULE 16

Support of Government Efforts in Addressing Financial Crisis in Saskatchewan

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my speech this afternoon, I will be moving the following motion:

That this Assembly support the government and the ministers of Finance and Economic Development in their efforts to restore financial freedom and revitalize Saskatchewan's economy by, on the one hand, acting responsibly and courageously to address the current financial crisis, and, on the other hand, by developing through partnerships a coherent, comprehensive, and realistic economic strategy.

And, Mr. Speaker, this motion will be seconded by my colleague and member from Regina Albert North.

Mr. Speaker, our government has started down a road of recovery in Saskatchewan. We have embarked upon a journey of renewal. But like in any journey, Mr. Speaker, you have to first plan the route that you're going to use and assess the resources that are available to finance your trip.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was through good common sense that the first order of business of our new government was to ascertain the true financial picture of this province. Much to our dismay after that picture came

abundantly clear not only to us, but all the people of Saskatchewan, is that we were shackled and restrained by a horrendous debt, a debt, Mr. Speaker, of \$15 billion; a debt that was costing the Saskatchewan taxpayer, you and I and every taxpayer in this province, a shade over \$2 million a day.

That, Mr. Speaker, came about as a result of the former government not having a plan, not having any strategy, not having any idea on the routes that they were going to take to deliver this province into the mess that they delivered it.

Mr. Speaker, some of the first things that we have to do to turn the corner on the economy and to start to rebuild this province is to try to rectify as much of the damage that was done by the former government. Of course, Mr. Speaker, this immediately required a revisiting of the deals that the former government had struck with the corporate sector, such as reviewing the sale of the Prince Albert pulp mill to Weyerhaeuser, the Bi-Provincial upgrader, the Meadow Lake pulp mill, and so on, Mr. Speaker. That process has started, Mr. Speaker, and is well on the way to restoring some economic freedom for our people and the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — I think, Mr. Speaker, that we in this legislature . . . as the people across this province are indicating to me every day, that they are taking their hats off to our Finance minister. Our Finance minister who has had the courage, the integrity, and the foresight to make the tough decisions, the right decisions, to get a handle on the economy of this province, to turn this province around from continually ebbing itself into debt as it has over 10 years of the former administration, so that we in this province once again can in due course of time soon enjoy a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, that will you obtain in our term of government. That, Mr. Speaker, will be the real rebound of this province fiscally and financially — the rebound that each and every citizen of this province will rejoice and enjoy in prosperity and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated earlier, in order to reach a goal or objective, you have to have a plan. You have to map out the route you're going to use to reach your goal. That, Mr. Speaker, we have done.

Our Minister of Economic Development has released recently the map that's going to lead to economic recovery in this province and it's called *Partnership for Renewal*. Our economics minister, Mr. Speaker, has laid out a clear and concise route for us to follow. But what is really encouraging, Mr. Speaker, is it has been joined not just by government but by all segments of our society have joined in the rebuilding of Saskatchewan.

I think, Mr. Speaker, as citizens of this great province of ours, and as those who've enjoyed the benefits of Saskatchewan, I would call on the opposition to set

aside their petty, political objectives and join forces with us. Join forces with the people of Saskatchewan to rebuild Saskatchewan to make it a better place for all of us to live.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1445)

Mr. Harper: — Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that has not been their record and that has not been their way. Their way, Mr. Speaker, was not to operate and work and develop programs and policies on behalf of ordinary people in this province. They only looked after the fortunate few. The unfortunate part of that, Mr. Speaker, is those few, very few came from Saskatchewan. Most of them came from other parts of Canada and other parts of the world.

But what they did do, Mr. Speaker, is they did take hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars and invest them in large megaprojects, megaprojects that in many cases failed — GigaText, Supercart, just to name a few. But leaving the people of Saskatchewan with not a meaningful investment, just leaving them with a meaningful debt. That, Mr. Speaker, is not our way. Because, Mr. Speaker, that is not Saskatchewan's way.

We in this province, Mr. Speaker, in our government recognize the true strength of our economy. That strength, Mr. Speaker, is our small-business people throughout this province.

It is a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, that nearly 80 per cent of all the jobs created in Saskatchewan are created in business places that employ 20 people or less. It's often been said, Mr. Speaker, that the motor of our economy, the engine that drives our economy is our small-business sector.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we have developed the programs through our *Partnership for Renewal* that will assist in this development of small business, strengthening small business.

Mr. Speaker, there are some success stories already in this province in only a short term of our government. My colleague from Kelsey-Tisdale has told me about the success story of Majestic Paper. Mr. Speaker, that is an example of a commitment of people to their community, of people to their province. Those are the success stories, the success stories where people invest in their own community for the betterment of their community and thusly for the betterment of the people in that community. As we through community-based industries develop strong community economies, we in turn develop a strong provincial economy. That, Mr. Speaker, is what is known as doing it the Saskatchewan way.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great need for furthering the development through education, through developing markets. And that we have embarked upon. We have set forth the formula for the increased educational development through industries teaching the latest

technology required to their employees.

And our minister has set forth a true plan of market development throughout the world by encouraging our entrepreneurs to make the visits and put the hand forth that has often brought back real productivity.

An Hon. Member: — Name two.

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked me to name two. Well I will name one, Mr. Speaker, one that I'm very proud of — one is Norquay Alfalfa, Mr. Speaker. That is strictly a community-based industry that was brought about by the determination of the people in that community because they had a dream — dream, and a willingness to invest in that dream.

They invested in that dream, Mr. Speaker, and saw it become a reality, a reality now, Mr. Speaker, that it's harvest just last year in its first year of operation, over 11,000 acres of alfalfa in the Norquay district and is presently processing 18,000 bales, Mr. Speaker. And that product is being exported to Japan and Korea.

That plant alone, Mr. Speaker, in its own small way has created 40 jobs and has added over a million-dollar payroll to the community. That, Mr. Speaker, is progress. That, Mr. Speaker, is a success story.

The hon. member from Morse keeps chirping in his seat that they started it. Well, Mr. Speaker, we finished it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I suppose one can go on for a long time enlightening the people of Saskatchewan in the rather dismal track record of the former government — and dismal certainly it is, Mr. Speaker. But I think that they probably know, for the simple reason, Mr. Speaker, they've lived it; they've seen it. And quite frankly, they're sad today because of it.

Mr. Speaker, we are rebuilding this province and we're going to rebuild this province basically on three principles — the principles of vision, the principles of goals, and the principles of reaching our objectives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks today by once again reading off the motion. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to move today the following motion:

That this Assembly support the government and its ministers of Finance and Economic Development in their efforts to restore financial freedom and to revitalize Saskatchewan's economy by, on one hand, acting responsibly and courageously to address the current financial crisis; and on the other hand, by developing through partnerships a coherent

and comprehensive realistic economic strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a tough act to follow, that moving speech from the member from Pelly. I thank you for the enlightenment you've shed upon us here this day. I say that as a friend and colleague.

Mr. Speaker, what this motion is about, is about moving into the future as opposed to hiding in the past. There isn't one of us here on government side of the legislature or on the opposition side, either of those two parties that would not wish the situation to be different than it is. I've heard much ado from opposition members about, why are you raising taxes? Why are you cutting programs? Why are you dealing with things?

Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is, we were dealt a hand that included over thirteen and a half billion dollars cold cash debt, and an additional one and a half billion dollars roughly in loan guarantees over which we had no control. That's the hand that we were dealt with when we formed government. Total \$15 billion debt.

Now you can't deal with a problem unless you acknowledge that you've got a problem. So the first thing that this government did, implemented the Gass Commission. And we said, find out exactly where we're at. We know the history of the former government. We know they would say that in an election year the annual deficit will be less than 300 million and it will turn out to be \$1.2 billion, by that former administration's own admission. We know that their track record was dismal, to put it politely. But dismal is about as strong as I can say without getting kicked out of here.

The situation that we've got is how do we deal with \$15 billion debt? We know we can't walk away from it. It's, Mr. Speaker, much like many people have the situation as they're growing up, of having a friend that wants to borrow some money. And of course being open and good-spirited, we lend the money.

If that friend doesn't pay the money back and they ask you again, usually we're forgiving enough, we'll lend twice, assuming it's a fairly small amount. But you know the credit dries up, it dries right up where that person comes and says, I need to borrow \$5 for lunch. Sorry, go hungry; you've not ever met your obligations in the past.

We have to meet our debt obligations if we hope to ever be able to maintain any semblance of government programs and meeting our obligations. So we must meet our debt obligations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect to a situation when you get too heavily levered, where you have too much

debt payment, it reminds me of when my wife and I moved into Regina some years ago. We bought a house, took out a mortgage. We thought we could handle the mortgage. Hindsight says we could. But I can tell you, we could just barely handle it in those early years. We could barely handle it.

We had too much debt. It was to the point where, when pay-day was nearing, my wife and I would argue over whether milk or cigarettes would win. Milk always won because we had small children. Milk always won, but all we had . . . the only thing we could afford to do was fight over is it milk or cigarettes.

We were house poor. Saskatchewan is house poor. But there was a couple of other things we could do, other than fight over what groceries came into the house or what came in to feed us, Mr. Speaker. There was a couple of things we could do. One of the things I remember very vividly — it being fairly cold out right now — I went the first year we lived in Regina without a winter coat. Why? So that we could have some food and so that we could try and maintain as good a style of living as we could. And I thought it was the lesser of a number of evils for me to be without a coat.

The second thing that happened . . . I'm maybe one of the only people, Mr. Speaker, in the world that for my 25th birthday I got a swing set. My parents bought me a swing set so that my then two children would have a swing set to play with. And that was sort of some of the things we did to manage.

Mr. Speaker, there are some things that can be done. The point is, they aren't all pretty. The point is, they have to be done. You deal with the problem now or you die a death of a thousand slices.

We're witnessing a death of a thousand slices. The opposition's colleagues, the federal government, has been systematically gutting Canadians — death of a thousand slices — for the last decade. When they took office, Mr. Speaker, the federal annual deficit was about \$30 billion. Here we are a decade later and it looks like the annual deficit is \$34 billion annually.

All the while tax increases. All the while slice. Death of a thousand slices. And they still haven't dealt with the problem. And they're running out of room to deal with the problem — running out of room.

If that's the party that's got the answers, talk to cousin Brian in Ottawa. Have him implement some of those answers. Have the central bank take on some of Canada's debt. Have the central bank buy some of the provincial debt. Have the central bank lower interest rates. Talk to cousin Brian in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, there are three kinds of people in this world. There's people that make things happen; there's people that watch things happen; and there's people that wonder what in the world's happening.

Well I'm telling you, the government members are people that are making things happen, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Trew: — Saskatchewan's a happening place and we're making it happen. We're dealing with the problems.

Mr. Speaker, just in my final moments I want to deal with a similar matter, and that is, I keep hearing about the first socialist government that ever formed office in Canada right here in Saskatchewan, that of Tommy Douglas.

And, you know, I was talking with an old time CCFer (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) just the other day in my constituency office. And he said: you know, there was no premier in this person's — in George's — memory that . . . He said: there's no premier that was ever called a dictator more than Tommy. There was no premier that ever had more predictions of dire consequences of the economy falling apart, of horrendous things happening, than Tommy.

But what did Tommy do? Started a box factory; it ultimately failed. Started a shoe factory; it ultimately failed. Started Saskatchewan Government Insurance organization that continues to be a model, a success model, not just in Saskatchewan, but for all of Canada and beyond, Mr. Speaker. It enables us to enjoy the lowest auto insurance premiums in all of Canada — right here in Saskatchewan — because of something that a socialist government implemented.

STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) started under Tommy. Saskatchewan Transportation Company built itself up over the years; wound up having a fleet paid for — a relatively young fleet — was breaking even over the years. Folks opposite form government; run up \$30 million debt; leave a decimated operation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close by simply pointing out one fundamental that we seem to have forgotten in the heat of the moment. And that is that what we're witnessing by our action on dealing with the deficit, what we're dealing with is the results of the plebiscite of the last provincial election where over 70 per cent of people that voted respecting balanced annual budgets, more than 70 per cent of the people that voted said yes, balance the annual budget. So we're doing it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to say this government is responding to the people of Saskatchewan. I will be supporting this amendment moved by the member from Pelly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a little sad that this motion brought forward today as rule 16, a little sad indeed. Mr. Speaker, we are faced with a motion from the member from Pelly that should

embarrass every member of this Assembly. It is amazing that he has the audacity to commend his government for the utter betrayal that has been and continues to be perpetrated on the people of this province. Absolutely amazing, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Regina Albert North talks about the hand that his government was dealt, Mr. Speaker, the hand that his government was dealt. Well what about the hand that the previous NDP administration dealt the Conservative administration? Four and a half billion dollars worth of debt in 1992 dollars translates to \$8 billion debt, Mr. Speaker.

And at the end, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks, I will be moving an amendment:

That all of the words after the word "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

condemns the government and the Premier for the betrayal of his election commitment to reduce taxes and cap government spending at no more than 4.5 billion, restricting the province's financial freedom as well as destroying the province's hope, economic vitality, by spreading excessively negative and unrealistic misinformation about the debt situation of this province.

And I will be moving that amendment, Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks.

But let's first talk about the so-called financial freedom referred to in this sad little motion of the members opposite. Mr. Speaker, I can only presume the member is referring to the freedom this government has taken with the way it throws around numbers, the great liberties it has taken to discredit the province's financial situation and void its own responsibility for the choices made.

Mr. Speaker, let us remember that the now Premier promised the people of Saskatchewan that there would be no tax increases under his government. None. That's what he promised, Mr. Speaker. The now Premier won his election promising to get rid of taxes, not to increase them.

He got elected on a promise to limit spending to no more than 4.5 billion, Mr. Speaker. And he went so far as to say that any government which could not manage on 4.5 billion does not deserve to be in government. Now those are his words, Mr. Speaker. Those are his words, the Premier now. So by his own words, Mr. Speaker, by his own words the Premier of this province does not deserve to be in government. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I can agree.

Not only has the Premier betrayed his promise not to increase taxes, he has dramatically increased government spending in the province of Saskatchewan. On both counts — on both counts — Mr. Speaker, by his own assessment, the Premier of Saskatchewan should resign, Mr. Premier. He should

resign as Premier of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to do a little math following up to the earlier throne speech contribution of my colleague from Wilkie. I did take a look at this research on the debt, Mr. Speaker, and some very interesting facts present themselves for consideration.

An enormous proportion of the increase in the debt this NDP government has delivered to the people of Saskatchewan, almost the whole increase, can be traced to writing off advances and loans, Mr. Speaker. Almost a billion dollars in advances to SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) for capital construction primarily in schools and hospitals, Mr. Speaker, as well as other advances.

The NDP government . . . Well did the NDP government leave behind any advances in the same categories? Did they? Well, Mr. Speaker, you bet they did. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you apply exactly the same rules to write-offs and write-downs to the budget of 1982, as this government is applying to the budgets of today, you'll find that there was an enormous debt in 1982.

And I challenge the NDP government, if they disagree with this. I challenge you. If you disagree with this assessment which is all based on numbers from the NDP government documents, if the NDP disagrees with these numbers, it is a simple matter to contact Donald Gass again and have him complete the same exercise in 1982 as he did in 1992, Mr. Speaker. Let him go over the same advances, Mr. Speaker. You'll find the NDP government under the member from Riversdale had 800 million in interest-free advances to Crown corporations on the books. Poof! Wrote them off just like that.

You'll find an additional 100 million in advances to Crown corporations that did bear interest, Mr. Speaker. Write them off and now we're at 900 million increase in the debt.

Then you'll find 130 million in interest-free advances to departments. Write them off too, Mr. Speaker, and we're at a debt of more than \$1 billion. Then, Mr. Speaker, take the 3.5 billion that the member from Riversdale himself acknowledges, 3.5 billion in third party debt in the Crown sector. That takes us to a total, Mr. Speaker, of \$4.5 billion in 1982 dollars. Translate that into 1992 dollars, Mr. Speaker, and the debt compared in equal terms, apples to apples, the debt that was left in 1982 was in the order of \$8 billion, Mr. Speaker — \$8 billion of debt that clearly was left by the NDP government of the 1970s.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that \$8 billion does not include the hundreds of millions of dollars of farm land that was bought up by the land bank, the program that was absolutely hated by Saskatchewan farmers. I do not believe a genuine evaluation was ever done of those losses, Mr. Speaker, and for those the previous government can be rightly criticized. I believe in evaluation of the massive losses due to the land bank should be done and should be made public.

But here, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about land bank there's a whole host of other problems the government had. We know at the height land bank owned over 1 million acres of Saskatchewan farm land, Mr. Speaker. We know that most of the purchases were made at the height of land price inflation, an inflation that was clearly made worse by the existence of land bank bidding prices up. So we do not include the losses of several hundred millions written off in land bank.

But, Mr. Speaker, even without considering those losses the NDP government of the '70s left behind a debt of at least \$8 billion in current dollars. Having that information would be helpful to the public, Mr. Speaker, because it would help them have a perspective on the debt challenge we do face in Saskatchewan. The fact is however that this government does not want the people to have perspective. They only want them to have panic and fear, Mr. Speaker.

Under the cover of that panic and fear the Premier hopes he can get away with this massive betrayal of his election promises. In the process, Mr. Speaker, he's destroying this province's hope for the future and that is something which can never be forgiven.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore move the following amendment:

That all the words after the word "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

condemns the government and the Premier for the betrayal of his election commitment to reduce taxes and cap government spending at no more than 4.5 billion, restricting the province's financial freedom as well as destroying the province's hope, economic vitality, by spreading excessively negative and unrealistic misinformation about the debt situation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I so move this amendment, seconded by my colleague from Maple Creek.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy this afternoon to be able to stand and second this motion which might in fact now provide some realistic meaning to being here today.

I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that earlier today I was very reluctant to be involved in this debate. I said to my colleagues that talking about this kind of a motion under the rule 16 after I read what was there just would be a waste of my time and the waste of the taxpayers' money to even bother standing up and talking about it.

Then my colleague suggested that, well maybe we could put an amendment into it and give it some substance so that it can have some meaning and give

some meaning to the day so that the taxpayers don't feel that they're being ripped off by our being here discussing it.

So that makes me feel better about getting involved in the debate, Mr. Speaker, because now the members opposite will have the opportunity to allow us to explain why we want to change their motion. And they in their wisdom can stand up and vote in favour of it. And as we debate this and show them the wrong ways that they were going with their opinion, they can fall into line, support our amendment, and make the day at least a little bit prosperous for the people of Saskatchewan.

And the way they can do that, Mr. Speaker, is by supporting our amendment and saying to the people of Saskatchewan that they admit that not everything that they are really doing is exactly right and that there are other alternatives that we should be looking at.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I was disappointed in the mover of the rule 16 motion when he was challenged to give two examples of what this government has done for economic benefits to our province. He could only think of one, and it turns out to be the one that the former administration, the Conservative administration, had almost set up and completed before the last election.

It would be nice if they could come up with an example of something that they've actually done for themselves except to blame everybody for all their problems and to run the province down to the point that everybody in the world is now starting to believe them.

(1515)

We've got people so convinced in the world around us, Mr. Speaker, that our province is down the tubes financially, that our credit rating sits on the brink of falling in a terrible disaster for all of the people of Saskatchewan.

When that happens it is usually a lack of confidence, not necessarily so much in the figures but in the attitude of the people that are running the affairs of the province. And the attitude of the people that run our affairs, Mr. Speaker, is that we are in terrible shape.

And people around the world are now starting to believe them, because they don't trust this government to be able to manage the affairs. They don't believe that they can bring economic diversification as this motion wants to compliment originally the government for doing.

Financial freedom and revitalize Saskatchewan's economy — can you believe it, Mr. Speaker? We have stood here today through question period listening to talk about taxation and a budget, a disastrous budget that is being predicted in those words by the Premier himself. A terrible, terrible black Thursday coming this week. The Premier has gone all over telling everybody what a terrible, bad budget this is going to

be for everybody, what pain it's going to inflict, how awful it's going to be. And now people are beginning to believe him, and our credit rating is starting to go down. What else could people do?

But I want, Mr. Speaker, to just say this. This one-term government of rural revenge has deceived and betrayed the people of Saskatchewan, and the people of Saskatchewan will be the ones that will give the final judgement on that betrayal. And they will give that judgement in just a couple of years. It won't be long now. We won't have to put up with this for ever.

The Premier said some time ago \$4.5 billion is enough to run this province. Anybody that can't do that shouldn't be the premier, he said. Well we're passed the 5 billion now. The man's been in power for 15 months. Where are we going to end up in another two years?

A disastrous budget would be to put it mildly. Even University of Saskatchewan, U of S students have figured out that there's an easier and better way to do things than the Premier of this province who told us: no more taxes; enough is enough; we can do it better.

The Premier of this province deceived the elderly and he betrayed them when he told them that he was going to give them a better health care system. And we can now predict from the statements made from the members opposite that the budget will certainly bring down the quality of our health care in many of our communities throughout the province.

And if it doesn't bring it down, then the user will have to go somewhere else because there's going to be line-ups; hospitals are going to have close. I predict that as a result of this budget, Mr. Speaker. And that's a sad scenario for the old people who believed this Premier during his campaign in the last election. They believed that he was going to do the things that he told them.

But I should, Mr. Speaker, as the critic for Labour, talk a little bit about the lack of opportunity for the workers in our province. A few days ago I was introduced as the critic of Labour. And that day I thought that was appropriate because the Minister of Labour was the speaker ahead of me and I wanted certainly to be in a position to criticize what he was doing.

But in real terms, as time has gone by, I feel more and more that I am able to realistically become the critic for labour because they are being mostly betrayed by this government. They are deceived by the programs and the plans that have been put forward by this administration. They were promised a lot of things before the last election, and now they're getting exactly the opposite.

And at this point we have to start looking at the reality that the common, ordinary worker is not being fairly represented. He is not getting a fair shake. And as proof to that, Mr. Speaker, I'll refer to the Saskatchewan statistics from the Bureau of Statistics that we've received just this past week. And it says

that:

The Saskatchewan unemployment rate for February of 1993 was 9.6 per cent . . . and is 1.3 percentage points higher than the 8.3 per cent unemployment rate of February 1992.

That's a direct quote, Mr. Speaker — 1.3 per cent below last year. This was a government that bragged that they were going to come into the province, take over and create more jobs and give more wealth and prosperity to our working people.

And now we hear the word "pink slip." Everywhere I go I hear, pink slips coming on Wednesday. The Premier himself has told the workers of this province and the people of this province that there will be massive lay-offs of people — in order to save his skin — in the budget so he won't look so bad when he runs all of the taxes through the mill that are coming on black Thursday.

Pink slips for the very workers that he promised in the election that he was going to help. He was going to improve their lot in Saskatchewan. He was going to give them better working conditions. He was going to give them higher pay and he was going to do all kinds of good and great and wonderful things for the workers of this province. And we have 9,000 less jobs this year than we had last year — straight from the Bureau of Statistics.

To be quite frank about it, Mr. Speaker, I thought that the working people of Saskatchewan had been doing fairly well. They were working their way up. But it was only natural when a leader of an opposition party would campaign that he was going to give them more, that they would want that. That's human nature. You can't blame people for that. That's the way it should be. You should be driven by the incentive to gain things for the better job you do.

And when the Premier, the now Premier, campaigned on that kind of promise, the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the people believed him, and they followed him. And now they know the truth. Now they know that they are never going to be able to trust this administration ever again.

It's not too often that I agree with the members opposite, but I want to agree on one item. I want to agree, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP government of the day has had to make some tough choices, tough decisions. But, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm first going to indicate that I will not be supporting the amendment to the motion but will be supporting the motion as it was originally placed.

I think that the members opposite in moving the

amendment have really watched the program *Dallas* and picked up on the initial program of one year where they turned the last year's production into a dream, because the writers had written the program into a situation where it did not have any of the main characters left and the program appeared to be able to be run for another season to make some money.

And the Conservatives opposite, Mr. Speaker, are attempting to come back and say that what we've seen in the previous six or seven years of their administration was only a dream and now they're coming back, presenting themselves as they actually are.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that that is the accurate situation. The member from Maple Creek says that the economic benefits in the province of Saskatchewan, that there's only one economic benefit that has occurred under this administration. I'd like to just take a little bit of time to indicate some of the things that have occurred during the past year, 1992.

If you want to look at receipts in agriculture, they've gone up 7.8 per cent. If you look at cattle, they went up 18 per cent. If you move to the resource area, crude oil production went up 7.5 per cent in the last half of 1992. Natural gas increased 3.9 per cent during the last half of 1992. And uranium sales increased almost 20 per cent over the last half of 1992. Housing starts went up 87 per cent from January to September, and dwellings under construction up 76 per cent.

The economic benefits are there in the province of Saskatchewan, and you can pick up the indicators all the way through, including the retail sales which went up 1.6 per cent January to July, whereas Canada as a whole dropped something in the neighbourhood of four and a half per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Estevan, when the leader of the members opposite said that you could afford to mismanage the province of Saskatchewan and still break even, but what he did not tell the people when saying that he was going to do that is that in order to achieve that — and even . . . and if you look at the record he didn't achieve it — he was going to have to dispose of a whole pile of assets that had been collected and put in place in the province of Saskatchewan. And I have a short list here that I'd like to indicate.

Sask Minerals was sold. SaskMedia, SaskOil, SMDC (Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation) was partially sold, the Saskatchewan Potash Corporation, the provincial park facilities, highway equipment, natural gas reserves, the Estevan Coal to Manalta Coal, equipment for the school-based dental program, a highway equipment which I've already mentioned, Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation — a part of that; the computer utility, the P.A. (Prince Albert) pulp mill, the saw mill at Meadow Lake, the saw mill at Big River. The directory of SaskTel was sold out of the corporation of SaskTel. And this list I know is not a complete list. It is only a short list of what actually took place.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were on their feet, indicated that they felt that the economic conditions in 1982 were much worse than what they are today. And I'd like to just point out to them that in 1982 the total combined debt — that's both the self-liquidating debt in the Crown corporations and the debt that was being tax supported — amounted to 26 per cent of the gross domestic product of the province of Saskatchewan. And by 1992 when they were no longer in power and . . . but reflects what took place, that had increased to 73 per cent of the gross domestic product, Mr. Speaker, something very close to 50 per cent of the gross domestic product in increase.

And that is what the disaster is. At that rate of 5 per cent per year, in 20 years you would put the province of Saskatchewan into a debt that equals the total production of this province in one year.

Mr. Speaker, the interest charges as part of the consolidated Fund increased from 43 million in 1982 to 502 million in 1992 under the Consolidated Fund, an increase of something in excess of 10 times, tenfold.

Mr. Speaker, just as part of this I'd like to point out that, in looking back at some of the budgets in the 1940s, this amount of interest that we are now paying in 1992 and '93 because of the mismanagement that the former Conservative government did in this province, equals that that the governments in the '40s were paying based on what the governments of the '30s and the early '40s had increased the public debt.

And it is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that I am prepared to support the motion as put forward by my colleague and will be voting against the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1530)

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in this House and participate in the debate on the motion brought forward by the member from Pelly. The member from Pelly brings forward important issues to this Assembly, the economic future of Saskatchewan and the policies that we need in place to get our fiscal house in order. And for that I extend my thanks to the member from Pelly.

In his motion the member expresses his faith in the government's economic policies, and I feel a strong responsibility to reflect the views of many Saskatchewan citizens who do not feel as confident about the government's approach to fiscal and economic development in our province. My problem, and the problem, Mr. Speaker, overall with the member's resolution is that while the province is focusing its efforts on restoring what they term financial freedom, the course they are charting to that alleged freedom seems to be costing people dearly.

It is costing investor confidence in Saskatchewan. It is costing us our competitive edge. It is slowing our economic growth as increased taxation has in every part of North America. It is halting consumer spending. And of greatest concern, it is costing many, many people their jobs in our province.

It is disturbing how some of the members opposite will take credit for such things as housing starts, which are directly related to federal interest rates and the federal policy of using RRSP (registered retirement savings plan) monies as down payments, but they fail to accept responsibility for circumstances which are under their jurisdiction. Since the government took power, according to its own statistics — and these go from November of '91 forward to just this past year — 22,000 people in Saskatchewan lost their jobs, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-two thousand jobs represents 5 per cent of the total workforce of our province. And while this loss of jobs cannot all be attributed to the government, much of it can.

This government raised taxes in the last budget by some \$340 million. It was the Premier who stated in May of 1991 that taxes are the silent killer of jobs. And he was correct. Many knowledgeable businesspersons throughout our province have turned a blind eye on Saskatchewan in favour of locations elsewhere, and they take job opportunities with them.

And I have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, where the 700 companies are that the government said would relocate here. Were they scared off perhaps by that \$340 million in tax increases?

An indication of how much faith we can have in our current government's fiscal and economic development policies can be found in the government's own mid-year financial report. Commendably, this report represents a step ahead in accountability. But there is evidence presented which is quite damaging.

Prior to the spring budget the Conference Board of Canada suggested that Saskatchewan would have a rate . . . a growth rate, of some 2.2 per cent. Six months later, after a slate of unexpected and unwanted tax increases, the government had to revise that growth prediction to .5 per cent.

A recent report from the Royal Bank has the member from Elphinstone somewhat excited because it predicts that Saskatchewan's economy will grow by more than 3 per cent. That article, however, Mr. Speaker, states that this growth is contingent upon whether or not the government's budget forthcoming will include many government tax increases.

I fear, as many Saskatchewan residents do, that it will be difficult to achieve a significant level of growth if the government chooses to raise taxes further on Thursday, as the Premier has announced it will. Clearly it challenges the people's confidence when the government's financial policies are taking jobs away and preventing people from creating wealth in our province that will eventually put taxes back into

the hands of government.

Well the members opposite accuse me of being simplistic. I can only say that the people of this province cannot see why they don't understand. Taxes are no way to create wealth. Economists the world over have taught us this. Dr. Vajder of Harvard has acknowledged this in all of his research. They are never going to help Saskatchewan chart its course to financial freedom through this method.

Yesterday and last week I raised the issue of Canadian Pacific bringing their customer service centre to Saskatchewan. I did so because there's a possibility here of creating more than 650 jobs for the people of Saskatchewan. If we're not successful in attracting this centre, what is even worse is we not only will not have the new jobs, we will be penalized by losing the 61 jobs we have and the \$2 million payroll with it.

This opportunity, this one more opportunity for jobs is going to slip through our fingers just like the 700 or so companies that the provincial government had indicated in its last year's Speech from the Throne, if the provincial government continues to be stubborn in its position on fuel tax.

When tax monies are left in private hands, Mr. Speaker, in the hands of employees, they use it. They put it through the system when they buy goods and services in their communities. They pay for lunches at their coffee shops. The money is used by people to purchase their everyday needs in grocery stores and retail shops all throughout our province. Money is also used by people to create jobs for all people in our province, and that of course should be the objective — to take people off the misery of the unemployment rolls.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the government is misguided in its approach. If it's going to continue to increase taxes, it's going to be the people of our province who continue to suffer.

I'm going to use the 15 cent per litre fuel tax on CP (Canadian Pacific) Rail just for illustrative purposes. It's the railway worker and the farmer and the potash worker who suffer particularly from this tax. The fuel tax, as you know, the average across Canada is 6.6 cents per litre, and in Saskatchewan it's 15 cents.

This makes it much more expensive for farmers to get their crops to the coast. It makes it more difficult for potash to get to its markets. And it forces railways to actually lay off their workers. Even more extraordinary is it puts all of the rail travel moving below the 49th parallel.

This kind of attitude toward taxation is going to really hamper our financial freedom, our personal freedom to find work and to seek a better life for people. And until the government calls upon experts with alternative views for achieving financial freedom, many Saskatchewan people believe that financial security and increased job opportunities are simply going to remain elusive dreams.

The white paper on economic development, I read with some interest. And the government said it intended to bring forward an agriculture strategy. Well March has arrived and the government has put out a paper. The paper is not a strategy, Mr. Speaker. It is merely one which is encouraging people to start discussing one. And if that's how one keeps a time line where we have to be commending the government for putting some time lines in, it reminds me to avoid asking the members opposite what the time is.

The real tragedy with the economic strategy for agriculture, with the taxation policies of the province, is that by missing this time line, by putting added pressure on the people through taxation, the government actually extends a situation which has become unbearable for people of this province, the consumers of this province, and the farm families of this province.

Until the members opposite understand that there is a direct correlation to increased taxation, to stymied economic growth, to lack of competitive edge, to the lack of opportunity for jobs to be created in our province, what we're going to have is a continuation of the difficulties we've been facing in our province.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank again the member from Pelly for putting his motion forward, but I cannot share his enthusiasm for the government's policies. Like most of the people in our province, I'm watching the government's actions with great concern for our children and particularly for the future of our young people. And I can only pray that the Premier and his government will use some of the taxpayers' monies that they have to run our government, to seek alternative ideas, to go against further tax increases, to seek ideas from those with expertise.

It is with regret that I cannot support the motion from the member of Pelly.

Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to stand here and talk in favour of the motion the hon. member from Pelly put forth, and against the amendment.

I could understand, Mr. Speaker, why the members across are chirping and mumbling and amending this motion because there's certain words in the motion that I'm sure that they can't understand — financial freedom, for instance.

You know I'm sure they understand financial mess. Financial mismanagement probably is part of their vocabulary.

An Hon. Member: — Disaster?

Mr. Renaud: — Disaster, financial disaster would be one.

They have no comprehension, Mr. Speaker, of the debt — \$15 billion. They have no understanding of

the interest that we have to pay each and every year — \$760 million. No understanding at all. They don't understand, Mr. Speaker, that our credit rating is probably the lowest — I think it is the lowest — of all the provinces in Canada. No concern, no remorse, no understanding.

The member from Estevan, their former leader, stated Saskatchewan has so much going for it that it can afford to mismanage and still break even. And they certainly know how to do that.

Puberty economics. The Liberals and Conservatives, Mr. Speaker, that's their economic policy — puberty economics. Give the economy lots of time and the pimples will go away.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the pimples of GigaText and Joytec and interest on our debt and Trinitel, those pimples don't just go away overnight, Mr. Speaker.

Their idea of financial freedom, Mr. Speaker, is to the chosen few. They're not concerned about the people of Saskatchewan, just the chosen few.

And I want to quote from the *Star-Phoenix*, March 10, 1993, Mr. Dan Zakreski. Let's see here: "... *Winning in a Global Market* conference." And further on it says:

... featured well-known agricultural analyst Faith Popcorn as keynote speaker.

Then-agriculture minister Bill McKnight organized the extravaganza to bring the movers and shakers of international food policy together in Canada. Why?

Further down it goes on to say:

An Agriculture Canada post-mortem on the conference set the gross price tag for the two days at \$1.07 million. Subtract registration fees and the net cost to the taxpayers totalled \$989,000.

Further down, Mr. Speaker, it says:

The budget update includes \$108,000 for Agriculture Canada, which included planning and personnel costs. There is a \$55,000 bill for "video conferencing" and another \$37,000 for two brochure mailings.

The gaping hole in the material is the \$238,000 for the DKM contract fee, translation, registration, public relations, miscellaneous disbursements and the like.

And further down it says:

DKM Communications, incidentally, is a national corporation that registered in

Saskatchewan on June 11, 1992 — a scant six months before the conference and only a month before the government tendered the bids on the event.

Its directors include (and this is the interesting part, Mr. Speaker) its directors include Don Pringle and Dave Tkachuk, both one-time assistants to former premier Grant Devine; Ken Waschuk of Tanka Research, which did polling for Devine; and Mary-Lynn Charlton, a one-time assistant to former finance minister Lorne Hepworth.

Mr. Speaker, that's what I'm saying. Financial freedom to the members across is to the chosen few, not the general public of Saskatchewan.

(1545)

In 1944, Mr. Speaker, 1971, 1991, who did the people elect to fix the mess that was left? The government on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the members opposite to join with us and the people of Saskatchewan in this journey for renewal. Financial freedom will allow us to determine our own destiny.

There's a few other words in there, Mr. Speaker, that I can see that they may have trouble understanding, and those words are responsibility and courageously. I think they'll have a problem understanding that.

In 1992-93, Mr. Speaker, we presented a budget. It was a tough budget, a responsible budget. We announced to third parties what they would get, not just in that year but in the following year as well, so that they could plan for their future.

In 1993-94, Mr. Speaker, we are going to give in a very few days another budget. Some people might say it's tough. But it will be a responsible budget, Mr. Speaker.

And I go back to 1991, Mr. Speaker, and I remember that there was no budget when the members opposite were in power. Why, Mr. Speaker? Were they scared? Was it because they were going to call an election? Was it because of politics? Did they feel any responsibility to the Saskatchewan people, or were they more concerned in getting elected?

And now, Mr. Speaker, the federal government, the same Tory administration is thinking of doing the same thing — not presenting a budget. Is it in the interests of the people of Canada? Is that in the best interests of the people of Canada, or is it for political reasons? That's a shame, Mr. Speaker, when they run this country based on politics only and not on the good of the people.

The *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, March 2, 1993: Just call them Canada's debt busters — Bob Rae, Roy Romanow, and Mike Harcourt. Canada's three NDP premiers present themselves Monday as the country's

debt fighters promising cuts in government services to slow the flow of red ink, Mr. Speaker. That's what I call courageous; that's what I call responsible.

There's another part of the motion I think that they probably have a bit of problem understanding, Mr. Speaker, and that's developing through partnerships. I think they have a little problem there, too. Nine and a half years, Mr. Speaker, we were told that the province of Saskatchewan was open for business. Well you know what that got us — \$15 billion debt, \$760 million a year interest. That's over \$2 million a day. Those were the megaproject years, Mr. Speaker.

And still today they tell us to build a CANDU 3 reactor without . . . They don't care if we do any study to find a need. They don't care if we do not have the financial resources. They just say, build it. Build it. We'll worry about that later. Just do it. Another white elephant, Mr. Speaker.

What really should happen I think, Mr. Speaker, is that the opposition should have another chair set there for their mascot, and that of course should be a white elephant.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Fair Share Saskatchewan. No consideration for the finances of the province. No consideration for the people, the workers. Their attitude of divide and conquer because all they're concerned with, Mr. Speaker, is politics. They're not interested in what's best for the province. Mr. Hardy, whose place I took . . . And the reason why there's only 10 people across, Mr. Speaker, is because of white elephant deals like Fair Share Saskatchewan and megaprojects.

Nine and a half years, Mr. Speaker, and . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Mr. Britton: — Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Here's Johnny.

Mr. Britton: — Here's Johnny, right.

Mr. Speaker, it's a little hard to find much to say after some of the stuff that I've heard. I looked at the motion and two words stuck out right away, and that was responsibility and courageously. Those two words in that caught my eye. I think these people should get their act together, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, we have the member from Melfort telling the people in Melfort that Saskatchewan is on the verge of bankruptcy. And then we have these people standing up and telling you what great and wonderful things this government is doing.

And the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, seem to have some kind of a notion that the money that they left owing in the province didn't attract interest; that it

was only the debt that we left that attracts interest. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've got news for them folks. We've been paying interest on your debt ever since 1982. And the members in the front benches know that very well, but they forget to tell the back-benchers.

Those numbers we put on the Table, Mr. Speaker, are your own numbers, the government's own numbers. Take those numbers, ask your front bench if those number are wrong. Ask them.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I had a pretty good laugh when I saw the whites come out this morning and saw the motion the member from Pelly was going to make. And I would say, what irony, Mr. Speaker, what a hoax. Another hoax — the same hoax they perpetuated on the province when they bloated up the deficit.

And now the Premier is saying the deficit is going to be half of the last one. Of course, because the other one was just wind. There was nothing but wind in that other one. Monkeying around with a pencil.

Now the member from Pelly wants us to support this motion — support the biggest tax grab in the history of the province. Support that? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

To support the actions of the many ministers of Finance over there in their slashing and hacking programs. They don't seem to realize every time they hack jobs they lose income. That's not the way you pay off the debt. You don't pay off the debt by taxing people; you pay off the debt by putting people to work.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that while the NDP were in opposition, they said enough is enough, and the NDP government would impose no new taxes. In fact, Mr. Speaker, their own studies on the effects of harmonization says, and I want to quote what their own study said: this tax increase will lead to increased inflation, reduced consumer spending and consumer confidence, and thousands of lost jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in lost economic activity within the Saskatchewan economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently there's been a change of heart over there. The many ministers of Finance over there have finally had a change of heart. Now the NDP consider it courageous and responsible to raise every tax in sight, and some taxes that were not in sight; \$15 million, Mr. Speaker, that don't show anywhere — 15 million. I want to show them to you. That's right.

And while they're doing this, Mr. Speaker, they slash programs and they cut services all at the same time, which means losses of jobs, people going on UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) or welfare. And that is supposed to pay off the debt we have? Incidentally, about \$8 billion which they're responsible for, which we showed here in the House. Challenge anybody to challenge the figures, and nobody has . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right.

That's right. You won't even bother because you don't want your eyes opened. That's why.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Time has elapsed on this debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Resolution No. 1 — Tax Increases

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, once again we have to rise in this Assembly and condemn this NDP government for doing exactly what they promised they wouldn't do to Saskatchewan people, to Saskatchewan taxpayers. And I think the motion is very appropriate, Mr. Speaker, particularly since we saw what happened in question period today when we asked a number of questions to the Premier of this province in regard to his taxation policies and the reasons that he could give to Saskatchewan taxpayers as to why that onerous burden was being placed upon Saskatchewan people.

And I would just like to read the motion into the record, Mr. Speaker.

That this Assembly condemns the government for its betrayal of Saskatchewan people in dramatically increasing taxes and using the utilities as unaccountable taxation machines after the Premier gave his solemn word in the 1991 general election that there would be no tax increases under his administration.

Well, Mr. Speaker, no tax increases. And the Premier promised that in venues all across this province while he was the leader of the opposition, while he was trying desperately to become the premier of this province.

I think Mr. Speaker, it might have been the fact that as one approaches a quarter of a century in this particular institution, that you begin to see your time passing by and that your desire, if you're in that position, to become premier becomes even stronger. And you're prepared, it seems, to throw caution to the wind, and as the election approaches, say things that you probably don't mean and don't plan on carrying out.

And I'd like to refer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to some quotes that I have here from the Premier of our province when he was in opposition. And he was talking to Saskatchewan people about the degree of taxation which they had at that time and the way that he would run the province of Saskatchewan in lieu of increased taxes, in lieu of raising utility rates, in lieu of increasing all of those small fees that are part and parcel of government that we all as taxpayers have to live with.

And I quote from CKCK-TV on September 3, 1991, and this is the member from Riversdale:

We believe in living within our means. We think \$4.5 billion expenditure a year roughly, is what we now expend in the province of Saskatchewan . . . (that that's) enough.

That's enough.

From the *Prince Albert Herald* of February 23, 1991:

"Tax increases were not needed to pay for the GRIP and NISA programs," says NDP leader Roy Romanow.

From the *Leader-Post* of September 6, 1991. You've got to remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're in that period of time just leading up to the 1991 election campaign.

No new taxes would be imposed; instead, the NDP would cut wasteful spending and encourage new economic development.

Well I've got many more here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I'll use as part of this debate. But I think from that you get a flavour of what Saskatchewan people were being told over and over and over again. On a weekly basis, both when this legislature was in session, when this legislature was out of session, we had the member from Riversdale going around this province, grabbing hold of absolutely every opportunity with the media to expound this message of: I can do it better, I can do it smarter, and I can do it without tax increases, without utility rate increases; that your health and your education and your agricultural programs will be safeguarded. And I will do it all because I will manage this province better.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the deficit in this province . . . and we haven't seen what the final number is going to be this year. It was projected at 517, but we know that the government went for special warrants for fully one-sixth of the budget year. So we have no idea exactly where we're going to end up. But my guess is it'll probably be the second highest deficit in the history of this province.

(1600)

That this Premier and this government have added to the total debt of this province probably in the neighbourhood of \$600 million, \$650 million, somewhere in there. But in fact since this government took office a couple of years ago, we're probably well over a billion dollars more on the total debt side of this province. And we have had unprecedented tax increases and utility rate increases.

It hasn't been on a yearly basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is like every six months, and almost always, I remind the members of this legislature, when the House isn't in session. This from a political party and a group that always stood in their place in this House and said that you should do your utility rate increases when the House is in so that we can ask the ministers the appropriate questions. That's what they said. All up and down the rows here they said, you should

bring in those increases.

But you know what we see, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We see it done in the dark of night in between Christmas and New Year's. We see it done every time when this House isn't in session, so that the ministers responsible don't have to answer questions in this House.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one goes through the list of Crown corporations, the family of the Crowns, as the New Democrats so fondly refer to them, the family of Crown corporations who were into the pockets of each and every one of us for 11 long years during the 1970s and the early 1980s, when you look at the retained earnings of the profit of the family of Crown corporations, you know, you look at SaskPower — these are 1991 retained earnings, I'm sure that the numbers are much more significant now — \$155 million; SaskEnergy, 99.4; SaskTel, 89.9; SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), 38.2.

Just these four of the family, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$382.5 million. Who knows what that number will be when '92 is finally revealed? Who knows? And we've had rate increases in December of 1992 that will add to this.

Now when one talks about 7 and 8 and 9 per cent in one calendar year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you've already got retained earnings of this size, and then you look at the pronouncements of the member from Riversdale time after time, time after time.

Here's another one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the *Star-Phoenix*, September of 1991:

The party (meaning the NDP party) has also promised to abolish the provincial flat tax.

So I mean, we weren't going to raise utilities and we weren't going to raise personal income tax; we were even going to take away the flat tax.

Well the last time I noticed on my income tax form, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's still very much a reality. In fact a lot of people in this province are very concerned that come this Thursday that that thing might even go up some more, that that promise to do away with the flat tax is going to become one more in that long litany of broken promises.

As we said to the Premier today in question period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are setting the all-time record in this province for broken promises, the all-time record. I mean if it was even done over a four-year term, people might take some solace in it. But here we are not quite at two years and we've already set the record.

We go back to a quote from the member from Riversdale, March 24, 1990, *Leader-Post*:

I say the people of this province are fed up with (Devine's) taxes, and we are going to change that.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's no wonder people fear change in this province. Because when it's NDP change, it means not less; it means more. Each and every time it seems to mean more.

And as my colleague from Wilkie has pointed out to this House on a number of occasions, that this government likes to hide behind certain things in order to justify these broken promises. They like to hide behind this ongoing charade of gee, I didn't know. Gee, when I promised all these things, I thought it was only such-and-such.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Riversdale is on record — on record — talking about a total debt of this province of over \$14 billion well prior to that election in 1991. And it doesn't take a mathematician to figure out how much the interest is on a deficit of a total debt of more than 14 billion. My goodness, he produced three economic analyses and statements based on the fact that there was over \$14 billion of total debt in this province.

We held them up in question period today. All his analysis was based on that number. And it isn't a whole lot less than what the interest is on the fifteen and a half or whatever it is now since he's added a billion on in the last couple of years.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when all of these promises were made all over this province in every media outlet, in town halls all over this province, the member from Riversdale knew that there was a significant debt attached to governing this province. But what people were listening to, was he said: I can manage with less; I can do it smarter; I can cut certain government functions out that will make me a better manager.

Well I would think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that his cleaning up of waste and mismanagement, as he called it, probably occurred many months ago. That any waste and mismanagement that we have in this government now is directly a result of the policies and the manipulations of the member from Riversdale. That's what Saskatchewan taxpayers are saying today.

When the seniors phone my office and say, my goodness, this party that I believed in all of my life are now charging me for most of my medical services, are now taxing me on all of my utilities, are now saying to me that I'm going to have to give more come budget day on my fixed income, they are really starting to question the promises made by the member from Riversdale and his cohorts in this province.

In those nine years that he spent in opposition, nine years that he spent in opposition because in his previous connotation as the deputy premier of this province, the family of Crown corporations meant more to the NDP government of the day than people did, the family of Crown corporations which spent billions of dollars borrowed in the United States of America at high interest rates to drill oil wells and buy potash mines and dig uranium mines and buy packing

plants. Those family of Crown corporations were more important to them.

And that's why in 1982 people in this province said no to the family of Crown corporations. Get out of my pocket, get out of buying things that already employ people here, and get on with protecting me when I'm losing my home, when I'm losing my farm, and when you put the very structures of our province in jeopardy.

It's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that someone no less than the former premier of the province, the Hon. Allan Blakeney, would say to people in Saskatchewan, 1982 in the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald*, when he acknowledged that there was no money left in the kitty when the Tories took power in 1982, and I quote: The public believed the government was well to do, had lots of money. There was in fact no lots of money.

And I quote again: The Heritage Fund was to take money and invest it like Saskoil, in potash and uranium mines. It was not the belief that the money would be there in cash to build hospitals or nursing homes.

And in fact what people were saying at that time was, you have let the hospitals and the nursing homes of this province deteriorate to the point where people don't feel comfortable being in their own community again. And I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a lot of the money spent in this province in the health care sector in the 1980s and the early 1990s was to rectify this situation.

And it was done, I suggest to you, it was done without using the family of Crown corporations to dip into the pocketbooks of each and every person in this province on a biyearly basis. It was done without saying to people that we're going to have 8 and 9 per cent increases in each one of our utilities, that there were priorities made.

But you know what we see today? We see all of these massive tax increases. We see all of these utility rate increases. And what do we see with the hospitals and the schools and the nursing homes? Do we see a commitment to open them up, to fix them up? No, we see a commitment to close them down by the tens and the dozens and the hundreds, because the members of this New Democratic Party government need to cover up their tracks that they laid in this province in 1990 and 1991 when the member from Riversdale promised up and down this province that \$4.5 billion was enough, that we could do with less, and we could still manage all of those things.

And he is on record as saying that there will always be enough money — always be enough money — for education; that education is something that you can't scrimp with, that you have to develop the assets and you have to deliver in order to educate our children.

And he would do all of that on \$4.5 billion without any new taxes, without raising utility rates, without

unleashing the family of Crown corporations back on Saskatchewan people's backs. And in fact we have seen just the opposite.

Now I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that at the end of the day here, with the Premier's new-found resolve to balance the budget in three years instead of four, that maybe all of this pain has something to do with the fact that come the 1995-96 budget year, when the member from Riversdale screws up his courage to have an election, that he's going to proudly stick out his chest and say, I balanced the budget. I balanced the budget on the backs of every person in this province, drove thousands out of it, shut businesses down, but at the end of the day he'll say, I balanced the budget.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even people in our universities, young people who are going to school, getting an education because they want to be part of Saskatchewan society, they want to be contributors, university students have got themselves together in Saskatoon and said, you know, things seem to be out of whack here. We can sit down and design an economic game plan here that balances the budget without causing all of this pain to Saskatchewan people. We don't need to unleash the family of Crown corporations onto the backs of everyone that lives in this province.

(1615)

We don't have to make every senior in our province feel like they are some kind of disadvantaged citizen. We don't have to have the best of our entrepreneurs packing their bags up and going off to Alberta or British Columbia or United States or some place else where they can practise their God-given skills, where they can go and make a dollar and contribute, where they can be part of the charities, where they can join in with the union hospital in their excellence campaign.

But instead we say to them, no. The kind of climate we're going to provide for you is one of increasing taxation, one of doom and gloom, one that means that the member from Riversdale can cover up his tracks with the Saskatchewan electorate about the things that he said in opposition and that he can balance the budget no matter what the cost, no matter what the human cost that happens to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote again, and this is from October 3, 1992, from the Harasen line:

Well, to answer your specific question . . . (and I'm quoting the Premier of the province, the member from Riversdale) we will not charge premiums or deterrent fees or utilization fees as they are called for a number of reasons. Basically, the fundamental is that they are not a fair way to finance the health care program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, unless I missed something, yesterday in this House I saw people asking that petitions be tabled on their behalf in this Assembly, tabled on their behalf because what the member from

Riversdale said, the Premier said, is diametrically opposed to what is actually happening; that even in that sacred area of health care, the party that brought medicare to this province, they are now breaking their word to the Saskatchewan electorate in that area that I thought was the most sacred of all to people of the New Democratic Party.

And obviously, Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's bent, his drive to cover up those broken election promises, even that area will be transgressed upon; that the party of medicare has now become the party of I don't care. I don't care because I've got to cover my tracks with the people that I promised so much to.

And I would suspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we see the Minister of Health implement her plan across the province of Saskatchewan with her non-elected board, with her friends, that we will see community after community in this province realize that the motto of "I don't care" is the motto of this NDP government.

Because when you have groups like SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and others across saying, Madam Minister, would you please change and repeal a particular piece of legislation so that you can't tax us through the back door, and she refuses, she refuses, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly to stand up and repeal that particular piece of legislation, even though she says it's not used by anyone in the province at present, you know that all of these organizations have come to fear this government, this government that said, I won't tax, but given the opportunity would use whatever means are at their disposal — whatever means at their disposal to use that tax.

The members of the opposition on almost each and every working day in his House have asked for leave to introduce the private member from Rosthern's Bill so that we can stand up and debate the issue. So that we can get the assurances from the minister that that particular piece of legislation won't be used against property taxpayers in this province. That anyone living outside the districts of a union hospital board will not have to fear another broken promise by this government.

But are we given that opportunity? No. The party of medicare stands on their feet each and every day and says, I don't care. I don't care. We're not going to debate that particular piece of legislation. We're not going to debate whether the property tax base in this province is going to be offloaded on once again by this government.

And that, Mr. Speaker, only further heightens the suspicion of people in this province that have been let down on so many occasions.

There isn't a person that drives a vehicle in this province, there isn't a farmer that drives his swather down the field that hasn't realized that there's been a promise broken. There's farmers all over this province who are getting their fuel rebate form and they're

looking at the \$600 and then looking at the total amount of gasoline that they've burned in order to earn a very meagre livelihood and realize that they have had their pockets picked by this government.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they talk about net farm income in this province being down to 240-some million dollars — the same level that it was at the end of the 1930s — when every farmer in this province, many of them devastated by the changes that the member from Rosetown-Elrose made last year in this House, changes perpetuated by the member from Canora who isn't out there pinching every penny possible . . . And then we have this government come in and pick their pocket a little bit more, a pocket that has been picked so many times, Mr. Speaker, that most farmers in this province are beginning to look like the chicken that was hung up in the barn in order to have his feathers plucked off. Because I'll tell you, they're right down to the skin now. And every last one of them is expecting to have a little more skin taken off them this Thursday.

When you have farmers in this province all over the place that are being subjected to interest rates by ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) that are two and a half and 3 per cent over what everyone else is charging, you know that you've got a government that has broken every promise they made to people in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, there's about \$400 million missing in rural Saskatchewan today because of the policies of this New Democratic Party government. They wouldn't cooperate with the federal government when they were given many opportunities.

They wouldn't even negotiate as they broke another promise of '91 when the Premier said . . . when the member from Riversdale said, I'll gather people about me, we'll get on a plane and we'll fly down to Ottawa and we will deliver like no government has ever delivered before.

And all we got out of that little exercise, Mr. Speaker, was a bill for about \$300,000 so that the member from Rosetown-Elrose could go to Ottawa and try and show everybody that he was smarter than everybody else. Well he isn't smarter than everybody else. And farmers by the tens of thousands around this province showed up and said that.

And now we've got the member from Rosetown-Elrose trying to do for the Department of Environment what he did for Agriculture. And everyone in this province is wondering come budget day, wondering come budget day, if there are going to be a whole new raft of taxes, environmental taxes, that will simply go to the agenda of this NDP government.

Are we going to get that on Thursday? Well time will tell, Mr. Speaker. But given the way that this government has operated, given the way that the member from Rosetown-Elrose has operated in his previous life as the Agriculture minister, I think people have got to worry. Because if he can do for the

Environment what he did for Agriculture, then that tells me that there's a whole new raft of pockets going to be picked.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I have to come back to the phrases of the member from Riversdale, the promises made in this Assembly and on Main Streets of Saskatchewan, in the radio and TV stations of this province, where: \$4.5 billion is enough, that I can manage on that and there will be no new taxes; in fact I'm going to cut out taxes in this province because we can do it better.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, three and a half pages of rate increases, three and a half pages. I mean you can't get married or divorced or buried or anything else in this province, Mr. Speaker, these days without having some kind of an increase attached to the fee. It just goes on and on and . . . I mean articles of incorporation, articles of amalgamation, articles of continuance, articles of amendment — they used to be 10, some of them are 250 bucks now. And it just goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure that when the member from Riversdale was running for premier he didn't even know half of this stuff existed. I mean these were the things that he was out there railing against, that he was going to take these things away so that they wouldn't be a burden on Saskatchewan people any more; he was going to tax fairly. And instead we've got three and a half pages of increases.

And they're not small increases. When you go from 10 bucks to 250, Mr. Speaker, we're talking a major, major increase. That is a cost of doing business for someone. Each and every one of these things impacts on Main Street, Saskatchewan. Every one of these is a cost of doing business.

You stack that up against some of the other jurisdictions in this country, it's no wonder we have senior citizens on the west side of this province saying they're moving to Medicine Hat because they can live for \$10,000 a year less than they can here, and yet they can get the same medical coverage, they can get the same insurance. People are seriously considering, Mr. Speaker, other alternatives to living in this province.

Now I don't think the intention of anyone in this province is to drive our population down. And I remember in the early 1970s when the member from Riversdale was the deputy premier of this province, we got down to 890,000 — 890,000 people. Mr. Speaker, you and I as taxpayers can't afford to live in this province if we get down to 890,000 people again. I guess because he's been there once, he doesn't fear.

Well I say to you, Mr. Speaker, as a Saskatchewan taxpayer, someone who has some interest in this province, I fear that. We need a million people here. Better than that, Mr. Speaker, we probably need a million and a half people here so that we've got the tax base, so we have the ability to maintain our hospitals and our schools and our social institutions.

And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if the Premier had kept his promise, if he had kept his promise about managing on 4.5 billion and not increasing the taxes, and managing a little bit and not letting his philosophical agenda get in the road of good government, then we just might get there. That the 1,600 people who left this province in January might not have made that decision. That the 9,000 fewer jobs that we've got from February of '93 to February of '92 wouldn't have disappeared and we wouldn't have a couple of thousand more people going to hit the bricks tomorrow and on budget day. That would probably be the reality, Mr. Speaker.

I mean there are lots of things that this government could have looked at. Our sistering province in Manitoba is working out arrangements with their workers on job sharing. People that are put out of a job because this Premier can't keep his promises aren't going to be able to contribute to our economy. They aren't going to do any of that base broadening that Isabel Anderson talks about. They aren't going to be part of solving the economic solutions, and they certainly aren't going to be able to help the people of this province pay down the deficit, Mr. Speaker, because they'll be out of a job.

(1630)

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from this government now for nearly two years that they have a plan and an agenda. They even have a white paper. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, if the present agenda of taxes, of dislocation, of digging into the bottom of every pocket in this province continues on, that that white paper isn't worth the paper it's printed on. It isn't worth the cost of producing it because it's a sham — an utter, utter sham.

Because the things that white paper talks about . . . And I give the government some credit; there's some good ideas in there. There's business people out there and organizations that actually believe some of this stuff.

But if this government doesn't reverse this agenda of taxation, of utility hikes, of rate increases, of fee increases, of their single-minded determination to cover up the tracks of the member from Riversdale and all the promises he made, then there isn't anyone going to subscribe to that white paper because it will be as hollow as a three-dollar bill.

And that's the challenge, Mr. Speaker, that's before this government, is to start coming clean, table the analysis, table the economic plans that they have that show that this tax regime and the things that they have done to Saskatchewan taxpayers at the end of the day means that we will have over a million people in this province, that we will be able to sustain our social infrastructure, that we will not see thousands of farm families have to leave because of the policies of this government.

Mr. Speaker, they had that opportunity today. They

will have that opportunity, I say to you, day after day in this Assembly, to table that analysis, to table the analysis that will show that the promises made by the member from Riversdale in 1990 and 1991, when he put together his three papers on the economy, weren't simply political rhetoric meant to get the member from Riversdale into that chair.

Because the members of the Progressive Conservative Party, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in this Chamber are going to ask day after day after day for them to table that analysis, to share with Saskatchewan taxpayers the game plan, to show that the rate increases that each and every Crown corporation have foisted upon the people of this province is legitimate; that by those rate increases we are going to encourage people to move into our province; that we are going to encourage people to open new businesses; that we are going to encourage people to hire our young people as they graduate from school.

And I would think, Mr. Speaker, that any government that purported to do all of those things would relish the opportunity to table in this Assembly, the Assembly of the people of Saskatchewan, the taxpayers of this province, that analysis; that the government would take that opportunity to lay on the Table here so that each and every taxpayer in this province can say that I am part of the picture, and I am doing my part, and I am not being unfairly abused by this government.

And we're going to give them that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, each and every day as we debate the budget, as we debate Bill 3, as we debate the other items that this government brings forward because beside each one of them should be the opportunity for every taxpayer in this province to look at it and say: it is fair; it is just; and I can play my role knowing at the end of the day there is a better day; and that I am not going to see once again the family of Crown corporations more important to the Government of Saskatchewan than the real families who make up this province.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Moosomin:

That this Assembly condemns the government for its portrayal of Saskatchewan people in dramatically increasing taxes and using the utilities as unaccountable taxation machines, after the Premier gave his solemn word in the 1991 general election that there would be no tax increases under his administration.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I count it an honour to be able to stand in the Assembly today to speak to the motion brought forward by my colleague, the member from Thunder Creek.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, as we have spent almost three weeks now in this Legislative Assembly, I think it is

quite imperative that we take note of what is taking place on the outside of these walls. And I think on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, when members come . . . when we come to this place, this historic place where we're gathered to discuss the laws of our province and to discuss the rules of how this province is going to operate and how the electorate are going to operate within this province, we seem to walk in these stone walls and sometimes think . . . Mr. Speaker, it's very easy for us to forget about the real world out there.

And what my colleague has been talking about today is the fact that we now have a Premier and we have a government who very methodically set out a plan, or laid out a plan, whereby they could aim to form the government of this province, and yet at the same time not necessarily be that honest or open with the people in Saskatchewan or with Saskatchewan residents or with the public.

As the motion reads, this Assembly condemns the government for its betrayal of Saskatchewan people and dramatically increasing taxes and using utilities as an unacceptable taxation machine after the Premier gave his solemn word in the 1991 general election that there would be no tax increases under his administration.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised the fact that the Premier said, oh time and time again — not just the Premier but many of the members on the front benches and many of the members re-elected, and I realize that there are a number of new members in this Assembly on the government side of the House, certainly elected as NDP members.

I believe they were elected because prior to 1991 the opposition of the day, the present government, certainly took the time to lay out a plan of so-called deficit reduction, but they would do it by not putting it on the backs of the ordinary taxpayers. They wouldn't increase taxes. There was enough revenue floating into the province of Saskatchewan, into the Consolidated Fund, that if they were elected government, if the member from Riversdale was elected premier, he wouldn't have to increase taxes. And just by a snap of the finger on election night, all of a sudden the province would find itself in a surplus position; there would be a balanced budget.

However, Mr. Speaker, little beknown the truth is finally coming out. What are we beginning to see? First of all, let's just review a few things. In the budget of 1992 and prior to that budget, just following the October election of 1991, remember what the Premier said shortly after the election: well we can't make a lot of promises now until we review the facts, until we review the scenario, the fiscal scenario that this province is facing. And before we do that, we're going to appoint a commission. We're going to appoint a commission of four individuals headed by Mr. Donald Gass to review the province's fiscal situation, because we're not exactly sure where the province is sitting regarding its deficit, regarding its spending, and regarding the overall deficit. We're not

exactly sure.

That's what the Premier all of a sudden was saying after he was elected by the people to govern this province. Prior to he said there was so much more . . . we'd get control of waste and mismanagement and we would balance the books. He wasn't really being honest with the people and indicating really what he understood was the deficit of the province, although I think they tossed out the fact that there might be . . . maybe the province had an overall deficit of some \$13 billion. On one hand we were at 13 billion; on another hand we heard 14 billion; now we hear 15 billion; and the next thing we know they're talking of a \$16 billion deficit.

And it seems, Mr. Speaker, certainly those figures can be used. It depends on the time, location, and the crowd you're dealing with or talking to, how you want to utilize the figures. But if the government of the day is now starting to talk 16 billion, certainly that wasn't the deficit that was there prior to October 1991.

We all realize that the province has been living on borrowed money. In fact, I don't know if there's an individual in Saskatchewan who today doesn't live on some borrowed money. We all live on borrowed funds.

And, Mr. Speaker, the individuals who are sitting in a good fiscal position are the ones who have not gone out and borrowed beyond their means or their ability to repay.

Now I want to get into some discussion on the deficit as we see it today and the fact that what this government is doing and what we anticipate will take place on budget day on Thursday.

What the government is presently doing and what is creating a lot of concern to the general public is creating such . . . is the fact that the government has taken a scenario of creating doom and gloom and creating a picture in this province which I don't blame anyone for not wanting to look at the province and look at coming to Saskatchewan and making Saskatchewan their home.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, when you look around and you listen to the rhetoric coming from the government benches, when you listen to the Premier, when you listen to the Minister of Health, the same individual who while in opposition continually condemned the former government for not putting enough into health care, continually condemned the former government for not being compassionate and understanding, and yet today, Mr. Speaker, where is that minister? What is that minister hiding behind? Where is the compassion that the minister talked about?

You don't have to look too far to see that there's obviously a very lack of compassion, or that compassion or understanding the minister had of the health concerns in opposition seem to have taken second place, or maybe have just been totally lost in the

back rooms. Or maybe they were lost in the cabinet rooms as they were sitting around the table and deciding how they were going to create the doom and gloom so that they can indeed administer the tax cuts and the tax . . . or not the cuts, the tax increases on everything that you and I touch.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the health situation and we talk about compassion, we look at the recent . . . recently, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Wascana Rehab Centre was looking very seriously at closing down a whole wing of rehabilitation, especially a number of rehabilitation beds for young children, a service that was available to 800 children across this province.

And now today, a couple days after the opposition raised the question, and the minister saying she wasn't aware of any such move, what happened, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, the Wascana Centre decided to then at least maintain five beds. But I suggest, is five beds . . . will five beds be enough? Is that really showing compassion and understanding to the children of this province? And specifically a child of one couple, that they brought their child down here; it was very severely handicapped. I don't think that's showing compassion.

I think today, Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing is a Premier and a cabinet and a government who are just continually hiding behind a deficit scenario to try and cover up the mistakes and the allegations that they made prior to the 1991 election.

And they continually look at trying to focus people's attention on the government of the '80s because they do not want the people of Saskatchewan to see exactly what took place through the '70s and then what's taking place today.

(1645)

There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that many people are concerned. And in fact over the past number of weeks, days and weeks, we have had people outside our Legislative Assembly walking up and down with placards in support of the organizations they work for. Saskatchewan government employees have been walking out here because they're very concerned. They're not only concerned about themselves, they're concerned about their families, they're concerned about their jobs.

And it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, and when I talk to people there are a lot of people that are willing to work together to address the deficit. There are a lot of people willing to pull their weight. And I would think even the public sector would be willing to pull their weight as well. However, I believe one of the main reasons they are out here, walking back and forth, protesting this government's action, is the fact that they believe this government was indeed not going to increase taxes.

They believe that as we had seen over the past number of years, SaskTel rates were going to be at the same rates. SaskTel was making pretty good money, good

dollars were coming in, had good equity. SaskPower rates wouldn't increase because the Power Corporation was making substantial sums of money to maintain the rates. SGI rates wouldn't increase.

But lo and behold, what has happened? Increases in SaskTel rates, increases in installation fees and hook-ups, increases in power rates, increases in natural gas rates, vehicle registration, and insurance, Mr. Speaker, increase in the provincial sales tax.

Remember the slogan, no more provincial sales tax. As of October 21, 1991, the provincial sales tax is gone. The provincial sales tax is gone. Yes it was gone Mr. Speaker, in the last budget. It disappeared from 7 per cent, but it reappeared at 8 per cent — an increase, not a decrease. An increase in the fuel tax, an increase in personal income tax, corporate tax, user fees in chiropractic services and optometric services.

So I can see why people are concerned. I can see why people are demonstrating. I can see why people are finding it very difficult to go to the bargaining table on one hand saying no, we're willing to stay at zero because we're willing to work together with the government and the rest of the people of Saskatchewan to address the deficit. But on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line has disappeared.

It seems every time they've turned around, that dollar that they've taken home at the end of the day has shrunk to the point that they really can't afford a zero any more. But, Mr. Speaker, many people across this province have indeed taken zero. And I think that you will find that people are more than willing to give.

We talk about a government that has misled people, a government that hasn't been very . . . totally accurate with people. And when I talk about the concerns out there, I just want to read a couple of paragraphs from a recent article in the *Regina Leader-Post*, Tuesday, March 16: "Cutback warnings jangling." Mr. Speaker, this is what it says, and I quote:

Her nerves sandblasted raw by the stern warnings blowing from the Saskatchewan legislature, a provincial civil servant choked on her words Monday while describing life on the job.

Her questions:

"How much more can people take? What's going to happen here if people all lose their jobs? This country can't take more people on social assistance," . . .

And she's right. And this is all coming from an individual who's worked for government for over 20 years.

The uncertainty, not just in the labour force and not just for people in business and not just for the farming community, not just for the health districts and the health boards and the health workers of this province, but the uncertainty right here in the public sector, of

what they are going to see on Thursday.

And it certainly wasn't enhanced, Mr. Speaker, when recently the Premier, I believe it was at SARM, indicated that I believe tomorrow for a lot of employees it's going to be D-Day, as the Premier indicated that the cuts would be announced even before the budget came into place. And I believe even we heard in this legislature an individual asking the Premier where his priorities were. Did he really care about the people of this province?

Mr. Speaker, what about all the people who have been working? And I believe one of the government members — I'm not exactly sure if it was the government member for Pelly or Nipawin; no, it wasn't Nipawin but it was Tisdale, I believe — indicated about Fair Share Saskatchewan. We remember all the rhetoric about Fair Share Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that the government of the day, while in opposition, talked about Fair Share as being oh, what an awful thing it was to ask people to work out of some of the larger centres in rural Saskatchewan. What an awful thing it would be.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, when you get out of this . . . if we would just remove ourselves, if a few people would remove themselves out of Regina or out of Saskatoon, they would find that there's a lot to be offered in our larger rural centres. And in fact it may be even more reasonable and more economical to live out there. They'd have more at the end of the day.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, by the end of the day, by the time this government gets through, Fair Share Saskatchewan is going to look like an awfully good program in light of the fact that a lot of the jobs and a lot of the departments presently working here today, even in Regina, Fair Share Saskatchewan isn't going to be gone. But Fair Share Saskatchewan . . . In light of the departments in this province, there are going to be a many, many people who will not be treated fairly, even as fairly as Fair Share Saskatchewan would have done.

Departments most likely will be eliminated. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe at the recent SARM convention, and I want to quote again from this article:

The same can't be said for the province's Rural Development Department, where the office atmosphere is tainted by word of its dissolution under the coming budget, with some of its functions and people relocated to other departments.

And it continues, Mr. Speaker:

Employees learned earlier this month of internal government documents suggesting rural development could be eliminated. One worker reports it as fact . . . (An individual who) worked for the government since 1977.

Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that there are people

right across this province, even in this centre of Regina, who had been led to believe by the former . . . by the government, by the then opposition that it wouldn't take a lot just to control some waste and mismanagement, and there would be so much more we could offer you. And yet, Mr. Speaker, I believe as I've indicated and as I've read, and as we're seeing in our papers daily, there is a vast betrayal and people are feeling betrayed.

Another paragraph:

One government employee, who asked not to be identified, said the uncertainty about the budget has spawned many rumors about how many years of government service are needed to be safe from the axe. "You don't know what to believe (any more)," he said.

There is uncertainty in this province and one can hardly wonder why would anyone even consider moving to Saskatchewan when we hear of the doom and we hear of the gloom that is being preached by this government.

Prior to the election of October 1991, \$4.5 billion was going to be enough to run the province; then after the election their first budget all of a sudden condemning the former Finance minister for suggesting there's a \$257 million deficit. When in fact, Mr. Speaker, if they would have followed the scenario of the former government, the government of the day and the scenario they had laid out as to how they were going to balance the budget, the process they were going to use and the fact that by even the harmonization . . . and certainly that's a word that the government of the day doesn't want to hear.

Harmonization would have been a very minor tax in light of all the tax increases that have taken place to date — very minimal, Mr. Speaker. And it would have been so much easier to administer. It would have been a benefit to manufacturing. It would have been a benefit to small businesses in this province. It would have been a benefit to the agricultural sector, and yet everyone would have paid their fair share. You would have paid according to your ability to pay, Mr. Speaker. But what do we have? Because of the uncertainty, because of the doom and gloom, people have come to the point where they just don't know where to turn any more. They're tired of hearing about the doom and gloom.

But let me just quote . . . make a few comments taken from the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, March 3, 1993. Talking about the gloomy scenario that is being presented, and the headline is, "Give us a break from gloomy scenario". And I'm quoting:

Premier Roy Romanow says he needs a break. He's already carrying around what has to be the heaviest budget any premier has ever been saddled with, at least to hear him tell it.

And then the article goes on to talk about the fact that the Premier is referring to the offloading of \$106

million from the federal government or the fact that the federal government is looking for the province to pay back \$106 million. But the article brought out the fact that it's not \$106 million today. The fact is the repayment schedule wasn't going to start until 1994-95 budget year, and then there was six years to repay this.

But let me go on:

In this regard, Romanow's government is no different. Romanow's government had no ethical difficulties with demanding refunds of overpayments from farmers under GRIP. Despite bitter opposition from welfare rights groups, Romanow is still demanding money back from welfare recipients who have been inadvertently paid too much.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. If there's guilt on one side, if you're going to demand that the federal government not ask for the repayment of an overpayment that came to the province of Saskatchewan, then let's think of the other people. Let's think of people in this province. Let's think of the overpayments and give them consideration, Mr. Speaker. We must treat people fairly.

Mr. Speaker, his response . . . The article also says:

His response speaks more to the NDP's political agenda than it does to fairness.

And the article will continue on with the debate about the upcoming budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is so much more that I could add and more I'd like to get into at another date but as for right now, for now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.