

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE
(BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 5 o'clock I was just about to conclude my introductory remarks, so I will do that at this stage. And I'm very pleased to see that so many members of the opposite party are flocking in just in case that they will not . . . so that they will not miss any of my remarks, as I attempt to continue to show them, Mr. Speaker, the error of their ways and to give them some cause for reflection.

Mr. Speaker, just prior to the supper break, I was embarking upon illustrating to the people of Saskatchewan that indeed this is a tough budget and that there were tough choices, but that the choices were of their own making, of the government's own making and that they were also, Mr. Speaker, not the right choices — not the right choices to accomplish the objectives of managing the deficit and certainly not the right choices in so far as the pain and the suffering inflicted upon the people of Saskatchewan as the government tries to get itself out of the deficit hold.

So, Mr. Speaker, we were talking about the kinds of things that they're doing. We were talking about their attempt to try to establish some kind of revenue increases. I made the point, Mr. Speaker, that revenue increases can basically come only from one source, and that's hip national. The taxpayers of this province are the ones that are going to be doing that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also made the point that this does not take any particular amount of courage. Taxing does not, Mr. Speaker, take any great amount of courage. It is the opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members of government stand up and they make much ado about trying to rewrite history and take this, what I consider to be a silly explanation, about the NDP (New Democratic Party) building things in the 1970s. Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot of the fact that they were busy building things in the 1970s.

And I want to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in the 1970s the government was one of the most fortunate ones in the history of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the 1970s are referred to as the super '70s. It is a period of time, for those of us that are somewhat in the middle-age era, that we reflect upon with a great deal of fondness. These were the times when inflation was running high, when wages were good and we seemed

to have everything going for us.

And I know a lot of people that I knew in the farming industry would buy land and they would buy land that was perhaps beyond the productive capacity of that land but nobody seemed to worry about it. They did not seem to worry about it because well we'll pay for it on next year's inflated dollar and we were able to get away with it for quite a few number of years.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the people of Saskatchewan, that this was a pattern that developed not only in the farming sector but in the business sector as well and certainly in Saskatchewan in the 1970s by the then Blakeney government. This was standard fare at the time. So, Mr. Speaker, we have the super '70s, revenues were pouring into the coffers of the province and they were just staggering, absolutely enormous amounts of income for the government.

We had at that time, Mr. Speaker, huge windfalls in oil revenues, grain prices were at an all-time high, the demand was great in those days. We had potash, we had uranium, all of them commanding huge, simply huge prices.

And I ask, Mr. Speaker, what did the folks across the way do when they were in government in the 1970s? What did they do? What did they do with all of that wealth?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask you, did they, did they in fact build anything, or did they in a sense squander the money. And you know the clichés that we have developed over a period of time about building dry holes in the ground, buying dry holes in the ground, buying potash mines and then borrowing the money at the same time to pay interest to the New York and Toronto bankers.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit there was a pattern of building. Certainly there were a lot of liquor board stores built during that time, Mr. Speaker. And I know whereof I speak because the town of Rosthern in my constituency received a liquor board store and it was built in Rosthern.

And it's kind of ironic, Mr. Speaker, that now, 11 or 12 years later, what do they do to the folks in Rosthern? Well we have again established our priorities, says the members across the way, because now what happened is the rural service centre in Rosthern was summarily closed.

It took exactly one minute to close the rural service centre in Rosthern. And the feedback that I am getting, Mr. Speaker, is that first of all that is not going to make this government very popular in my area. And if they had their druthers, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what they would want to have closed — the liquor board store or the rural service centre which this government has decided upon as their strategy.

This is one of the choices. This is one of the choices that this government is making. They built liquor

board stores and close rural service centres. So we have a real heritage of 10 generations squandered, Mr. Speaker. It has utterly and totally destroyed the hope for financial freedom through the crisis that we would and now have to continue to face.

So I say to those members across the way, you cannot and don't you dare be sanctimonious about the 1970s. They were the richest period of time for government, and yet the people suffered. So is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that after all of that money was squandered there would be problems when that windfall stopped, when the crisis finally hit as we knew, as everybody knew, that it ultimately would.

And then these members across the way, Mr. Speaker, have the audacity, the gall to try to lay all of the blame on the feet of others. And we hear that from time to time all the time in question period when the ministers light up their blame throwers and blame everybody except themselves.

So I challenge the members opposite to look at what did transpire through the decade of crisis in the 1980s. Let's take a look at the '80s for a moment now.

We know, Mr. Speaker, there was a period of drought; it was a period of flood; it was a period of collapsing market for grain, for potash, for uranium, for oil. All of the commodities, the natural resources that Saskatchewan has been blessed with, we have found that the bottom dropped out and we had the most disastrous years since the Great Depression, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, in the late '70s, in the early '80s, what were the people of this province facing? Horrendous interest rates, Mr. Speaker — on top of it all, horrendous interest rates. And yet no relief for the people of Saskatchewan by the former government. Now before I am accused of becoming too sanctimonious here, let me first of all lay it on the table very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that I am also a believer of the fact that the former government was not perfect. I think that it would be naïve for anyone to even suggest something like that. So there were mistakes made, Mr. Speaker, major mistakes. But it did understand, the former government, our government, did understand what Isabel Anderson talks about and it did build in this province.

In nine short years, for example, Mr. Speaker, the manufacturing base of this province was increased sevenfold. The manufacturing base of this province was increased by 700 per cent. We had more diversification in those nine years than in all of the history of Saskatchewan before them. This province, Mr. Speaker, grew and the economic base was being diversified as quickly as possible.

It was recognized that we could no longer be hewers of wood and drawers of water. It was recognized that you have to have the value added industries that can only come if you start to do something with your raw products before you just simply sell them on the market to someone else and then buy the refurbished

or the manufactured products back again.

So, Mr. Speaker, there were mistakes. And I'll tell you something that you might find rather strange, something that I find very strange and I think also that the people of Saskatchewan and the media might find strange, and that is this: that we on this side of the House now did learn from our mistakes, Mr. Speaker. We did learn from our mistakes. And I suggest to you that the NDP has not. The NDP has not. If this government were genuinely in possession of just some modest wisdom, it would in fact learn not only from its own mistakes, but it should learn from the mistakes of the previous government. Yet it has proven that it is completely incapable of doing so, Mr. Speaker.

In my opinion, one of the great mistakes that we, the previous government, made was to allow the rallies and the threats and the protests to have too much impact. And in that impact, Mr. Speaker, the previous government did not cut deeply enough or cleanly enough in those areas where cuts were and are warranted.

That's my personal view, Mr. Speaker. But has this government learned anything from that lesson? I say to you, sir, that it is absolutely unacceptable that \$6 million in this budget is allocated to artists when the financial situation of this province is being characterized as a crisis. Six million dollars being contributed to artists.

Well that I am receiving letters of utter terror frankly, Mr. Speaker, from senior citizens, for example, who cannot qualify for this government's so-called safety net that is supposed to be in place and yet they cannot afford their medication. The choice is simply a cruel one, to say that at the same time while we cannot afford medication for our seniors, we do have \$6 million for artists, or that we do have millions of dollars to keep the Deputy Premier, the former minister of Finance, in his office so that he can continue to pad his pension allowance for the ultimate time when he will retire.

Mr. Speaker, that's what I've been talking about over the last little while, and that is choices. That is choices that this government is making.

And the NDP have no right, Mr. Speaker, no right at all to say that while I'm talking this way that I'm being divisive, that I'm attacking artists when I put that choice on the table. I don't believe that I am. I bear no ill toward the artist community, toward the arts and the different kinds of arts in the community, Mr. Speaker, because I love art just as anyone else. I go to auctions and I buy art pieces and so on.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, when the choices are laid on the table, we have to make the proper choices. And I don't consider this to have been one of the proper choices.

So, Mr. Speaker, I share, I share the view of Paul Martin, for example, about the funding of certain

economic development programs. But I would even go one step further than Mr. Martin does in his because I think maybe I'm a little bit more aggressive. I have learned the lesson that this government refuses to learn.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, I say that the \$50 million a year that goes to the Department of Economic Development — all of it — we could hack it out of the budget. We could do that. We could simply hack it out of the budget and replace it with a dramatically reduced funding for a private sector economic development authority.

We could give them let's say a third of that. We could develop funding for \$50 million, Mr. Speaker, and have an automatic sunset clause involved where that sum of \$50 million is automatically reduced by a million dollars every year until it is indeed a full private agency on full self-funding.

(1915)

Why is the government spending \$150 million on economic development, I ask the members opposite, in a time of crisis? And I guess what is most discouraging is the bang for the buck that we as taxpayers in this province are getting lately.

And all the lost opportunities — when it comes to economic development, Mr. Speaker, businessmen tell me . . . and they tell you too; I'm sure they do. All businessmen tell you, get out of my life. Get out of my life; let me control my own business. Don't stand in my way. Government, get out of the way. You're slowing me down . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You see, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting a rise out of the members opposite when I say that, because in their heart of hearts they are still socialists to the core. Their fundamental belief is that government is bigger . . . the bigger the better — socialists to the core.

We could talk of the Soviet Union, and we could talk about central Europe. We could talk about all these countries that are tripping over themselves trying to get away from socialism. And we have Cuba and Saskatchewan. The people in Ontario you can't include in that any more because they've had a year more of you guys. You see? That's what I say. Get out of life, and at the same time we would be saving the taxpayer of Saskatchewan \$150 million. Mr. Speaker, I have learned that lesson; the members opposite have not.

I'm going to give more alternatives because I don't think anybody has the right to get up and just condemn. So I've given you a couple of alternatives already. Here's another alternative I think that we should be following and that is that we cut out all funding for non-essential third parties. Cut out all funding for non-essential third parties: Health, Education — obviously — Social Services. Planned Parenthood, in my opinion, would not get a dime of taxpayers' money while there is a debt in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, while I'm saying that, I apologize to all advocacy organizations for saying that. But my constituents are telling me loud and clear that this is what they want to hear. And I'm passing this message on. I'm passing this suggestion on. This is one of the choices that could be made in order to save money for the government.

They're telling me that they want these types of expenditures stopped and they want them stopped now. And I'm willing and I'm ready to stand in this Assembly and give voice to those demands as I'm doing right now. No more money, Mr. Speaker — another alternative — no more money from taxpayers for abortions. No more money from taxpayers for abortions.

The people have spoken — 63 per cent said unequivocally, don't do that. Don't do that.

An Hon. Member: — Is that a saving?

Mr. Neudorf: — He says, is that a saving. You can't find money for drugs. You kiboshed that plan. You can't find money for insulin. You've kiboshed that plan. You can't find money for oxygen, the people that need 6, 7, \$800 worth of oxygen a month. You can't find money for that plan.

And you ask me, does it save money if we stop abortions. Priorities, Mr. Member. Priorities. Choices. Choices. Those are the choices that you are making. I'm telling you the choices that I would make.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say again, this government is not learning its lesson very well. It's not learning the lessons that we were taught. And we learned belatedly, I grant you that.

There would be no more money, Mr. Speaker, for organizations about the status of women. Gone. Mr. Speaker, I held and voiced these same positions when I was on the other side; I still hold them now.

Mr. Speaker, we never seem to be able to cut through the campaign of the member for Riversdale that the money was there. I remember being elected in the fall of 1986, as a good many of the members of this House were. When I was elected in 1986, we went to Cypress Hills, in the park there, for a so-called caucus retreat. We made some very significant decisions at that time.

And one of the decisions that we made was that we can't afford to be where we are and afford the funding of all the programs that we wanted to fund or that the people had grown accustomed to being funded. And so we started to cut back; we said we can't afford it. So we made cutbacks of various dental plans; the most famous one was the children's dental plan. The drug plan, we instituted a user fee for the drug plan.

What did the member, the Minister of Health, the opposition member of Health in those days say? Ranted and raved and screamed and said that the people were now going to have to choose between

drugs and groceries. She even accused us of being the cause of death of individuals.

That's the kind of pressure you guys were putting on when we were in government and you were in opposition. You had absolutely no knowledge of the economics of the province or at least you pretended that you didn't. You pretended that there was no reason to cut back on anything. The constant . . . and then somebody brings up the old socialist . . . Cargill, Saferco.

That, my dear Mr. Member, is the only thing that you've got positive to say in this budget speech is Saferco and the money that it's making. The money-losing effects of the PAPCO (Prince Albert Pulp Company) in Prince Albert — losing \$91,000 a day and we turned it around. It's making lots of money now. And you're holding these up as shining examples of what the NDP government has done. You see you're making choices, members across the way, you're making choices based upon the wrong information that you have always been supplying to people of this province prior to you being elected, and that is, that money is no object.

We can live through 4.5 billion budget, we can spend more on health, we can spend more on education, and we can do away with harmonization at the same time. That's what you said. And that's why I get aggravated every time I think about the deception under which you guys were elected, and gals. Those are the conditions under which you got elected. That's the only reason you are there.

We gave the people of Saskatchewan a plan in 1991 and they looked at it and they said, oh that means harmonization, oh that's great, \$180 million coming in from taxes. You never talked about the fact that all the farmers out there would get the benefit of their input costs being returned in taxes, the businessmen would get that, the mechanic in the garages were looking forward to getting the refund on their tools as an expense. But you said, no we'll take away the hamburger tax, we'll take that away.

The people looked at your plan, which was no taxes and more spending and then they looked at ours, and we said more taxes because it had to be paid for. We lost. The people looked at your plan and said, no we like their plan better so they voted for you in overwhelming numbers. And we felt chastised and crawled into our little corner in the legislature here and this is where we're operating from because you were elected on that assumption.

You know, Mr. Speaker, something just came to mind that I've never expressed before and I'm not quite sure whether I should and the adage in politics is, well if you're not sure, then don't. But I'm going to break that, because what we're seeing in our system in Canada, what we're seeing under the parliamentary system and the party system and the system that has party unity, party solidarity, and if you lose a confidence vote you lose government, this kind of thing, so we have to have that kind of party solidarity.

And when it comes to election time, over the last number of years — and I'm not blaming the NDP or the Liberals or the Conservatives when I make this assessment — but I feel very strongly that within our system is built some of the biggest dangers in itself. Because what we're doing as parliamentarians is saying, this is a plan, and we go to the public and say, can we use your own money to buy your vote. We've done that. The Conservatives have done that. And then the NDP come up and say, oh yes, but we're going to take your money and we're going to give you more, vote for us. And that's the system that we've developed over the years, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know if I should say that we bribed the people with their own money, but it seems to me that that is exactly what's happened. I remember 1986. We came up with a plan for the home-owners. We came up with a plan where you could get your \$10,000 and you could get your \$3,000 and you paid 7 per cent interest. And we were chastised for implementing that and keeping our promise after the last election.

But what did you guys come up with? Oh we've got to beat them. You came up with your seven times seven times seven — \$70,000, 7 per cent, for 7 years. And I think at that point the people were beginning to say, oh that's ridiculous, because I think they began to see how politics in Saskatchewan works, in Canada works, under our parliamentary system works. And the people allowed it to happen.

So what am I saying? I guess what I'm saying is that the Conservatives are to blame, the NDP are to blame, the Liberals are to blame, because that's how the system works. And I would even put some blame on the taxpayers because they allowed themselves to be bought by the highest bidder in reverse.

I think that's inherent within our system. And I think what happened in 1991, Mr. Speaker, in that election, is that we came forth with our plan, and it was a little bit different. It wasn't the plan that we'll do away with harmonization, that there will be no taxes for two years and that there will be more spending on health and more spending on education. That was the plan that these people came up with.

We, I think, were beginning to envisage this because this is a concept that I've held for a long time, and I've expressed it in caucus. I'm not saying I had any influence in the final decision; I'm not naïve here. But I do think that our plan was more realistic. But why should the people vote for higher taxes through harmonization as we were planning to do if . . . And they put their trust in the Premier and his words, and they voted you in.

But let me tell you this: there are fallacies in my reasoning, no doubt, that you can poke holes into, but let's just say in general I'm correct. I think now that gone are the days — gone are the days, Mr. Speaker — where people can bribe the folks out there with their own money. I think people are sceptical. They're cynical. They're going to see through that. And from

now on it's going to be the party that comes up with the most comprehensive, effective financial plan for this province that the people are going to put their trust in. I'm convinced of that.

I got sidetracked, Mr. Speaker, but basically that, I think, is one of the messages that I want to leave with this government, that you're making choices. You're making the wrong choices. If you're not going to learn from your own mistakes, at least learn from ours. Why reinvent the wheel? And that's something that I would sincerely like to leave with you.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but I think I have the attention of the members. And I think with this softening-up barrage, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to turn the podium over to my colleague from Morse so that he will be able to deal a little bit more in depth with an amendment, Mr. Speaker, to the motion. An amendment that I'm sure will give cause for some serious reflection on members of the opposite way. And my colleagues on this side of the House can flesh this out a little bit more.

Mr. Speaker, I move then, seconded by the hon. member from Morse constituency:

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

regrets that the provincial budget demonstrates the government's betrayal of the people of Saskatchewan by failing to adhere to the promise of: implementing no new taxes; holding government expenditures at \$4.5 billion; providing economic opportunities and jobs; supporting rural Saskatchewan; protecting the working poor not on welfare; ensuring all residents have adequate access to health care and education; conducting an open and honest government; keeping cabinet to 10 ministers until the province can afford more; and a complete failure to bring patronage excessives of government under control.

Mr. Speaker, I so move. Thank you for your indulgence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1930)

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I first of all want to congratulate the Minister of Finance, the hon. member from Saskatoon Westmount, on the budget that she has presented here today . . . or this week. I realize it's a tough budget but, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a budget that will keep Saskatchewan on a course of recovery. I also want to thank the former minister of Finance, the hon. member from Regina Dewdney, for all the hard work and dedication that he put into the budget process in the province of Saskatchewan.

This may be a tough budget, and I feel at this time that that is really what is needed. And I'm only going to

take a few minutes to explain, Mr. Speaker, just how we got into the type of mess that Saskatchewan is in today. And this has been said over and over again, but I think it's worth saying again because we've got so many serious problems created by the Conservative government opposite.

In 1982, as you know, we left the Conservative government with \$139 million in the bank as surplus. There was a long-term debt that we had in this province that was less than \$3 billion. At that time . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, that's right, it was less than \$3 billion. The interest rates . . . the interest that was paid on the long-term debt in the province in 1982 was \$43.3 million. That was the interest that was paid. So you can just figure that out. And I might add that the interest rates in 1982 are a lot higher than they are right now.

And what has taken place since 1982 is quite a change, and as I indicated, that's why we're in this problem here today.

It only took the Tories 10 short years to turn that surplus of \$139 million into a \$15 billion debt, a \$15 billion debt that we face in this province today. And we're not paying \$43.3 million on that debt. What we are paying today — for the member from Wilkie — we're paying \$847 million a year on interest rates, and the interest rates are quite low right now compared to 1982, Mr. Member.

The Tories can sit there and they can holler, and they try to put the blame on us. But let me tell you, I've been around this province, and I've been around this province since the budget came in, and everybody in this province are blaming the Tories. They're putting the blame where the blame should be. That's why we're in this mess. And we're going to get out of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thompson: — When I talk about 1982 and having a surplus and a low total debt, we also had the assets in this province to be able to maintain that. The assets belonged to the citizens of Saskatchewan. In 1982 we had a low debt rate, we had less than 4 per cent unemployment — everybody was working — and we had the assets to back that up. And what has happened? What has really changed?

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what has changed. When the Tories came in, the first thing they did, they started selling off the assets. And they didn't really sell them off, they gave them away. That's the sad part of it. They gave them away to their friends — the coalmines given to their friends Manalta Coal up in Calgary. That's when they started.

Then they took the highway equipment. They sold off \$40 million worth of highway equipment for less than \$5 million. That was the start.

Well the hon. member from Wilkie calls it a bunch of junk, but let me tell you there was a lot of buyers that were coming in here from the United States and other

parts of Canada. They sure took it up. They didn't think it was junk.

And I can also tell you that the 250 Highways workers that you fired in one day didn't think they were junk. They were the individuals who operated them, and they maintained that equipment. No, it wasn't junk; it was good equipment.

Then you proceeded and you sold off the oil. Then you sold off the potash. You sold away our forest industry. You sold off the uranium industry. You gave it away. You just gave it away.

We no longer have these assets. And really when it comes right down to it, Mr. Speaker, the citizens of Saskatchewan no longer control the province because you have sold off all the assets that we had.

Those are the problems that we face. That is what's created this large debt that we have right now. And all the citizens in this province are going to have to work hard to pay off that debt. And they've committed themselves. They realize what has happened and they realize that it has to be paid back because if it's not paid back, who is going to suffer is going to be our children, our grandchildren, and our great grandchildren for generations to come. And they are the ones that are going to suffer in this province.

It's going to be tough. But I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that the citizens of this province will come through and we will get rid of this debt and we'll make Saskatchewan a very proud place to live and to raise our children.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thompson: — Mr. Speaker, we now have to start charting a new course for Saskatchewan, a new course for the future. And I want to indicate what I feel will solve the problems that we have in the constituency of Athabasca that I represent, and solving the solutions to the mess that was left behind by 10 years of Tory rule.

Projects that I am working on and will continue to work on with all our departments and the ministers in charge of those departments, projects that will get this province back on its feet and will get the citizens working in this province and especially in the constituency of Athabasca — these are projects that are going to help to solve these problems.

Some of the projects are — and I'm going to go through some of the projects tonight that I've been working on with the ministers in the departments — in the highways and roads. And that is important to any area and any region of our province. The last region to be de-isolated, to have access to roads, is that far north country. And we're going to be working on that. A road to the far North where the Minister of Highways and Transportation is continuing to work with the federal government in Department of Indian Affairs to try and put funding in place so that we can start to build that road.

And I just want to indicate to you what it means to the citizens that live in that far north country. When we talk about being tough and what people are paying, paying for their goods and services because they have to fly it in to that far north country, I just want to give you a few examples, not to take too much time of the House, Mr. Speaker.

But these are prices that I received from that far northern country and Stony Rapids, Black Lake, Fond-du-Lac area, just in the last week. A loaf of bread at one store costs \$1.99. Both stores — I'm using two stores up in that area — that loaf of bread is \$1.99. A dozen eggs at one store is \$3; at the second store, it was \$2.75 for a dozen eggs. Two litres of milk, \$4.50. A can of Alpha milk, one store was \$1.79; the other one was \$1.98; \$1.37 for an apple and over a dollar for oranges . . . or \$4 for four oranges.

So that just goes to show you what they're paying up in that far north country and what the highway or a road system up there is going to mean. They're paying 97 cents a litre for their gas up there. So you can just see what it's costing them — 97 cents a litre for gas.

Roads — that's the roads to the far North. An important piece of road that was left unattended is the road between Big River and Green Lake. That is now in the process of being completed, and they've got the right of way cleaned right through to Green Lake. So that's going to open up another important area for north-west Saskatchewan.

The road to Fort McMurray is in the planning stages right now, and the province of Saskatchewan is working closely with the communities up in the north-west side of the province at La Loche and the Alberta government to put that connection through. It's not a large connection, approximately 60 to 70 miles, and we'd have a new link between northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan. And that is going to be an important feature for Saskatchewan. And most certainly it's going to create a lot of jobs.

We want to rebuild other roads in my constituency, and I will continue to work for that: roads such as the road into Canoe Narrows and the rebuilding of many of the other ones.

I now want to turn to another item that I think will solve a lot of our problems in Saskatchewan, especially in northern Saskatchewan, and that's the forest industry. The forest industry right now is probably at its highest peak that it's ever been in many, many years.

Ontario is now cranking up all their small saw mills to take advantage of the lumber markets south of the border in the United States. The United States was talking about eliminating all the duty on Canadian lumber so they can get as much as they can get over there because there is a tremendous demand for lumber, and we most certainly have the timber in this province.

And what I have been working on in my constituency

is a small-scale forestry operation to take advantage of the millions and millions of feet of mature timber that we have up in that area. And granted there are forest management lease agreements that will have to be negotiated, but I just say this, and I say this quite clearly, that that forest belongs to the citizens of Saskatchewan and it's standing there and it's not being utilized. The demand is there and we have to negotiate that agreement with a firm from out of province. But so be it. We'll do that and we'll create these jobs.

Small-scale operations will create hundreds and hundreds of jobs. We have the timber, the availability of mature spruce, tamarack, and jack pine, both in abundance, that can be used for fence posts for the farms and for railroad ties. And we have lots of that and we have to start taking advantage of it. And I intend to keep working on that. Every one of these items here creates jobs, and jobs that we so dearly need.

I now want to turn to another item in my constituency which is important, and that is the commercial fishing industry. We have in my constituency, literally thousands of freshwater lakes that have not been fished and are full of fish. And they should be. The consumers are demanding a low-price fish and there's no reason why we shouldn't be taking advantage of the products that we have up in northern Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, that's right.

And once we get a connection up into the Fond-du-Lac country and Black Lake and Stony Rapids country, that road will open up hundreds and hundreds of freshwater lakes that can be used for commercial fishing and can be used for tourism. So there's no reason why they both can't work hand in hand.

The problem is, what we're doing now is we take the fish that the commercial fishermen are producing, they keep it in their fish camps for maybe 48 hours, and then they have to haul it in 100 miles, 150 miles to a fish plant. Then it's re-iced and then it's trucked a thousand or more miles to Winnipeg to be processed. And that is wrong. We're exporting all the jobs out of this province.

It is time that we started to change that. We could still have central selling. We can sell our fish to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. But we should be processing the fish, Mr. Speaker, right in Saskatchewan, right up in northern Saskatchewan where the lakes are.

(1945)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thompson: — What happens when you take a freshwater fish and you keep it in boxes and ice for 48 hours and then you . . . All the handling into the boats and out of the boats and to the agents and into the truck, and then you truck it over a thousand miles to

Winnipeg, and you get 100 degree temperatures; and then the fish is processed down there and then you get it back at the supermarkets in the stores in Saskatchewan or it's distributed around the world. But most certainly you never get a fresh product.

You could go into . . . And I was given some prices that I got in Saskatoon here the other day — I went in and looked at it — \$5.50 a pound for a jackfish. The fishermen are getting a little over 50 cents a pound for that fish. A whitefish, \$6.76 for two small fillets. The fishermen are getting less than a dollar for that.

And pickerel, pickerel — I seen a pickerel there and it wasn't fresh, it was by no means fresh, it probably had gone all the way to Winnipeg, back to Saskatoon. And anybody that knows anything about fish, you just have to take a look at the eyes and you can tell that the fish is not fresh. And what are they charging? They're charging the consumer \$8-and-some-cents for that small pickerel. There's no reason for that because the fishermen are only getting a little over a dollar.

Now this is something that we have to put a stop to. We've got the fish. We've got to get up there. We've got to start processing our fish in this province. We've got to get tough with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation in Winnipeg and say, look if you want to sell the fish, that's fine, but you process it in the province of Saskatchewan so that the jobs stay here and the profit stays in Saskatchewan and you don't have all that waste. I think it's time that we have to do that. We have to take a look at it, and a serious look, so that the producer gets their fair share.

And I tell you when you're up in northern Saskatchewan . . . And gasoline in my constituency in the southern part is in the 60 to 63 cents a litre; as I indicated 97 cents up in the far North, a litre. You have to have a good price for your product. And I want to continue working with the departments to see that we will carry that out.

I now want to turn to an important industry in our province. And only one, one industry that I'm going to use here in the mining. There's many other mines that we have. There's the gold mines, there's potash, there's coal, there's many other mines in this province.

But I want to talk about the uranium deposits and what it means to northern Saskatchewan and to the rest of our province. When we set up the uranium mines before 1982 we had surface lease agreements on all the mines — the big mine at Key Lake, the one at Uranium City — and those surface leases indicated quite clearly that 50 per cent of the jobs had to go to Northerners.

And that's fair because the resources, the mines are right up in northern Saskatchewan. Northerners don't ask for 50 per cent of the potash jobs in the potash industry or 50 per cent of the jobs in the coalmines. I think that it's fair that they get 50 per cent of the jobs in the uranium industry that is up there. And we signed those surface leases. And what they have done,

they've created high-paying jobs.

But there are a lot of other deposits up in northern Saskatchewan that they're on the verge of getting developed, and I just want to bring out just what this one industry would mean to the province of Saskatchewan. We have the three mines that are actively operating right now at Cluff Lake and at Rabbit Lake and at Key Lake, and these are three mines that are all in the process of expansions. And at Cluff Lake up in my constituency, the Cluff Lake mine have always maintained the 50 per cent to 53 per cent northern content. And these are good, high-paying jobs.

But I want to indicate what we still have up there to be developed. And most certainly as exploration continues there will be a lot more ore bodies that will be found and the demand is continually growing for uranium in our province. Some of the deposits that we have up there, and I'll just give you what the poundage are in some of these mines: the Key Lake mine, 95,700,000 pounds of uranium.

Then they have some smaller deposits at Rabbit Lake. There's Collins B with 14 million; Eagle Point, 122 million; Collins A, 16, 17 million; Cluff Lake has 41,600,000 pounds of uranium; McArthur River — that's where the exploration is taking place right now — there is 260 million pounds estimated in that reserve; Cigar Lake — the test mines are in operation right now — there's 385 million pounds of uranium in those mines; McLean Lake has 45 million pounds; Midwest Lake, 36 million.

And most of these have not been developed yet. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the citizens of this province, that that amount of ore . . . and it's high grade ore. A lot of that can be taken out of the ground.

I'll just give you one example. At the McArthur River it's estimated that the uranium is at 5 per cent, which means that for every tonne of ore that you take out of the ground, you get five pounds of uranium out of that five tonnes of ore . . . of that one tonne of ore.

Some of them are a lot higher. Cigar Lake, for every tonne you take out of there, you get 9.25 pounds of uranium, and that's where the test mine is taking place. But the total for the known reserves right now is 1,052,100,000 pounds of uranium. Now just imagine what that is going to mean in terms of revenue to this province and jobs to northern Saskatchewan and to the rest of the province. It is just fantastic. And that's one industry.

And I want to take it a little bit further, Mr. Speaker. Just imagine if we still retained 50 per cent ownership in those mines. Not only would we be getting all the jobs in the spin-off, we would be getting 50 per cent of that profit. And that's where the Tories went wrong. They sold off all our assets. But we still take advantage of the jobs and we appreciate that, and there'll be many, many jobs that are going to come out of this industry.

I think it's facts that we have to look at, and look at seriously. If we're going to continue to develop that industry, we have to make sure that as a government, that it's developed in the safest way possible, not only for the environment but for the health and safety for the workers that are up there. We were the first ones to set those regulations. They are the toughest in the world. And we will continue to set those regulations and make sure that they are honoured.

Mr. Speaker, there are other areas that I want to touch on, projects that will provide much needed services and provide good jobs to the citizens of my constituency.

We were sadly lacking in hospital services. The hospital at La Loche that you, Mr. Speaker, officially opened many years ago when you were the minister of Health, that hospital is badly in need of some repairs now and we have to take a serious look at that. The far North most certainly is a serious problem and we have to solve that regarding health.

And nursing homes, I've been working with the department to try and get a nursing home in my constituency because the constituency of Athabasca is the only constituency in this province that does not have a nursing home. The citizens in my constituency have to go to Meadow Lake and North Battleford and Prince Albert and all over the place to get into nursing homes. And that is something that's needed and I will continue to work on that.

I think that one just has to go into the North and realize and see just how far it is to get to health services, and then you will realize that we have to get more then into northern Saskatchewan. Individuals who are travelling by bus 3, 400 miles to get services or fly in from Fond-du-Lac and Black Lake and Stony Rapids and Uranium City and Camsell Portage, they have to fly out in the middle of the night, or whenever it is, to get to the services that they need. And sometimes, Mr. Speaker, it's not successful and we have disasters.

There are sewer and water projects that the government is working on right now, and I've been working very closely with them. We still have communities in northern Saskatchewan that do not have the basic sewer and water systems. Poplar Point and La Loche is one good example. Stony Rapids is another example. St. George's Hill and Michel village, these are all projects that I've been working on and will continue to work on.

As I indicated, in the constituency that I represent, the constituency of Athabasca, we are facing some serious problems. We have high unemployment, high numbers of individuals who are on social assistance. And I want to just give you a few examples of just how bad it is in the constituency of Athabasca.

And the main reason for this is, Mr. Speaker, between 1982 and 1991 the Conservative government of the day, in their wisdom, decided that they were going to move all the services out of the Athabasca constituency into Meadow Lake and into La Ronge.

They've pretty well taken all the services out of there. And the result of that is what we have up there right now — high unemployment and a high rate of social assistance.

And I want to give you two examples of the two regions in northern Saskatchewan, and this is of December 2, 1992. Children on SAP (Saskatchewan Assistance Plan) in the constituency — and this does not include the figures on the Indian reserves, and I have seven reserves in my constituency — in the constituency of Athabasca, we have 800 cases, family cases on welfare, and there are 2,000 children who are receiving welfare in the constituency of Athabasca. You move over to Cumberland on the east side of the province and that figure where we have 800 in Athabasca, in Cumberland it's only 169. Where we have 2,000 children on assistance, there's only 438. And that just goes to show you the difference in the two regions of the province because of the mentality of the Conservative government who decided that they wanted to move everything out of Athabasca.

The hon. member who used to be the minister of Health, the member from Meadow Lake, one of his first tasks when he got in was to get rid of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. And he went in with vengeance, and you can see the results of what we have right now.

And I say that we have the most . . . I have the most hardest-hit region in this province. The situation is serious and we have to most certainly solve that problem, and I intend to continue to work with the ministers of all the departments involved to see that that happens.

These are the projects that I have been working on. I intend to keep doing it. It's not going to be easy because we have a tremendous shortage of finances in the province, as I explained before. But the citizens of this province, they're hardy people, and we will work hard to make sure that we get out of this mess and to create a future.

My constituents in Athabasca are no different, Mr. Speaker. All they want is a job and a chance to raise their families with dignity. What they want and what they need is fairness. And I say, Mr. Speaker, as we chart our course for the future, fairness is first and foremost, and that is what's going to solve the problems up in the constituency of Athabasca.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget and I will be opposing the amendment. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of things that I want to say here this evening that deal with the budget. I have however some things that I want to talk about that have to be said prior to the budget. And I want to make a point on an issue that I think is of significance. And a letter . . . I guess it has somewhat to do with the budget too, Mr. Speaker, in

that it has a line in the application form that the government sent out to hire students. It's Partnerships '93: employers and students working together.

And, Mr. Speaker, there was . . . I was hoping the Minister of Labour would listen. There's one line in there that has caused a very serious concern in my constituency, and I have received letters from it. In fact one of the constituents of mine wrote a letter in the local paper that outlined this, and this is the observation it makes, Mr. Speaker. It's the application form, and the provision that irritated one of my constituents in this application form says this — it's under the criteria for employment, eligible employment — priority will be given to employer applications that provide employment for a student of aboriginal ancestry or a student with a disability, Mr. Speaker. That appeared in the '93 Partnerships, employers and students application form.

(2000)

Mr. Speaker, I just want to read the letter that was written in the paper regarding this form. And it says:

Dear sir: (It's a letter written to The Southwest Booster.) I am enclosing a copy of an application form I received from the Government of Sask., for a student employment program. I personally find it very racist!

What is racism?

I received a copy of the Partnerships '93 today and on the very front page was a statement that I could not believe I was reading. For those of you that have not read it, let me quote it for you. This quote is under the 'Eligible Employment' section. "Priority will be given to employer applications that: provide employment for a student of aboriginal ancestry." It also gives priority to the disabled and in that I do not have a problem.

If I (being an employer) placed an ad in the paper and stated that a person that was of "white" ancestry would have priority I would not even be allowed to place the ad, and rightly so (Mr. Speaker). How can the Government (of Sask), using tax dollars, single out the aboriginals and give them priority? What about the equal opportunity to the other visual minorities, or all of the students that happen not to be aboriginal? Do these students not need jobs as well, or are we as employers to flip the whole bill for labor on non-aboriginal students! The color of a persons skin, or the nation that they were born in, should not be a condition of "priority" for the government. They are all students and all need the money from summer employment equally. Canada — "Land of Equal Opportunity" ?????

And this, Mr. Speaker, is not the only place that this appears. I want to point out to the minister responsible

for Indian and Metis Affairs in an ad that appeared in the Regina *Leader-Post* on May 17 . . . or March 17. It's: "Assistant Deputy Minister — Metis Affairs." And in it it says: "This position is limited to women of Aboriginal Ancestry."

Mr. Speaker, in plain words I think those kinds of things should not be done in a Canada that is a free and democratic society where it is a fundamental right for individuals regardless of race, colour, or creed to have an opportunity for employment in the province of Saskatchewan. And this, with a government that is bringing in a human rights Bill that deals with those kinds of things, I think is absolutely, totally wrong.

I have no problem with hiring aboriginals. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have a niece and a nephew who I am proud of who have aboriginal ancestry. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a fact. However, they do not have the rights above what I have. They do not have the opportunity above anyone else. And that is the problem that I have in dealing with those two things.

And I wanted to point that out so that members of the government side of the House would know what their ministers are doing in relation to at least two programs that set apart the opportunities over and above all others the rights of those kinds of individuals. That is wrong, Mr. Speaker. And I want to point that out as I begin my remarks here this evening.

This budget speech, Mr. Speaker, has what I call . . . it has gotten to the lowest common denominator, and that is we all share misery equally. We all share misery equally. It's the lowest common denominator in a socialist program as we've seen it outlined here today and in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the concerns that I have and I've always had regarding the kinds of economy that a socialist government will provide, and that is that they believe and fundamentally believe that the more they tax the people of the province of Saskatchewan, the more the economy can grow. And, Mr. Speaker, it's evident in the last budget, it's evident in this budget, and it's likely going to be evident in the next budget.

Mr. Speaker, in order to have an effective economy pay for the goods and services that are required by the society we live in, that economy has to be absolutely going full bore all the time. And it cannot be taxed to death. What we have in the province of Saskatchewan is a horrendous tax load carried by people who have an opportunity to move. Mr. Speaker, as I live on the western side of the province I have seen this over and over again.

I visited with a gentleman from the Rosthern constituency earlier on this month and he told me he had just been to Banff and was on his way home and he passed truck load after truck load, van after van, of people moving out of the province of Saskatchewan. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a fact.

And, Mr. Speaker, on top of that, I want to point this out. On top of that, I'm going to raise another issue

that is just as relevant. In the city of Medicine Hat, which is a hundred miles away from Swift Current, they're setting up a new Superstore. The Superstore in Regina has dominated a lot of the grocery business and other businesses for a long ways around it, Mr. Speaker, and so will the grocery store in Medicine Hat. Superstore is putting that up.

What are they going to do, Mr. Speaker? They're going to go to that store where it's easier, it's easier, Mr. Speaker, and less costly to have product brought into Medicine Hat, Saskatchewan, than it is into Swift Current.

In fact last week as I was driving into Regina the mayor of Maple Creek said that he was going to . . . he and the council were going to initiate some positive relationships within the community to see whether they could bolster their economy in that town.

And he said — and he said this on the radio, the public could hear it — he said, we don't know what the impact of the budget is going to be nor do we not know what the impact of this facility being built in Medicine Hat is going to do.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people have an opportunity to travel and buy that service that they could buy in Saskatchewan. They have the opportunity to buy it elsewhere.

And that isn't all, Mr. Speaker. That opportunity to purchase those goods and services are not just clothing that went up 9 per cent on adults and 1 per cent on all of the other stuff. But it also has to do with those items and goods that are there that households need — dryers, washers, mixmasters, all kinds of household utensils. All of those things, Mr. Speaker, can be purchased in Medicine Hat and then brought back into Saskatchewan tax free. And that, Mr. Speaker, is happening on a regular basis. People go there for a weekend, come back with their vehicle full of goods that should have been purchased in this province, Mr. Speaker.

What we have in tax increases in this province is going to cause us serious, serious hurt. And the hurt is going to come in the very fact that people who have to buy here, who can't afford to go there, will decide to buy here and it will cost them more. And, Mr. Speaker, those are the ones that they should have the opportunity to get that tax break too. But they are the lowest income earners in the province. And that, Mr. Speaker, is obvious. And what are we doing? We're taxing the low income because the others can go cross-border shopping.

As a matter of fact, the member from Regina Rosemont was not even in the House the day that the individual budget was presented in this House. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of thing that I think is going to happen over and over and over again. He decided that cross-border shopping in the United States was far more important than listening to the budget. And he probably was right. That is the concern that we have in the province of Saskatchewan as Conservatives, and

the people have.

There's other things that bother me that need to be addressed. Mr. Speaker, the automobile association came to me the other day and they said, an individual who has a son or a daughter or a relative living in Alberta can ask that individual to give him the vehicle that he purchases in Saskatchewan, give it to him, and he doesn't have to pay any tax on it.

That's the kind of thing that happens in the province of Saskatchewan. And the motor dealers have asked this government to change that so that that cannot be done, and yet it's continually happening. And they've done nothing about it.

Mr. Speaker, on the west side of the province we have an energy industry that is serviced almost exclusively out of Medicine Hat. Who gets the benefit of those oilfield services? Not the people of Swift Current, not the people of Gull Lake, not the people of Maple Creek, not the people along the border all the way north to Pierceland.

It's not the Saskatchewan people that get that, it's the people from Alberta because they can get the benefit of lower costing, the services they provide to the people of the oil industry. And where do they want to go? They'll go where they get it the cheapest, Mr. Speaker, and that's a fundamental right that they have.

Now I want to point out something else that is just as relevant today as it has always been, and that is that people on fixed incomes in the province of Saskatchewan who have an opportunity to move are going to move to the lowest-cost place where they can live. And that, Mr. Speaker . . .

I know a farmer from Herbert that has already purchased a house in Medicine Hat. Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, he can pay the tax in Medicine Hat, he can pay the kinds of things that he has to purchase for his personal services, the goods and services that he needs to live, he can purchase them cheaper than he can in Herbert, Saskatchewan, or in Swift Current or any of the other places. That is happening across the board. And, Mr. Speaker, it is happening more on the west side and on the south side, I would say to you, than anywhere else in the province.

What's happening to our economy as it relates to tax dollars? The more you push the button in central and eastern side of the province, the harder and tougher it will be for you to survive and me to survive because those people can't access themselves to the low-cost goods and services that are provided in Alberta. And that is a fact, Mr. Speaker. And that is a fact in oil or fuel. It's a fact in goods and services purchased right across the board. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what people are doing over and over again.

If you want to have a description of how people work when they want to entertain themselves, do they go to the Cypress Hills and stay on the Saskatchewan side? No, they go to the Alberta side to get the goods and services provided. And, Mr. Speaker, that happens

over and over and over again. And that is a part of the problem with putting too many tax dollars on the kinds of things that we have today.

I think, I think the solution is clear. And I really have appreciated the remarks that Isabel Anderson made. She says — and she's absolutely right — you have to have wealth creation in order to sustain the debt that is here. That is exactly what she said. And that is exactly right. You cannot have a tax on a tax and drive the business out of the province of Saskatchewan and not have an opportunity for growth.

And what have we got for growth, Mr. Speaker? In the throne speech they talk about AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.). And who put the AECL package together? It wasn't those people over on the other side of the House, the government. It was the opposition when they were government.

Who put all of the commodity things that . . . and I'll have a list of it — who put the fertilizer plant together that is going to earn tax dollars and revenue on royalties serving the natural gas industry into the province of Saskatchewan? Who's going to provide the benefit, or who's going to get the benefit of that and who provided that? It was the Conservative government that did it, and the people over here are going to get the benefit as well as every other person in the province of Saskatchewan.

A new paper plant up at P.A. (Prince Albert). And, Mr. Speaker, there were 300 people working there. Now there's 1,100 people working there. Who got, who got the benefit of that, Mr. Speaker?

And that is the reason why I want to point out to the members of this Assembly, you need wealth creation in the province of Saskatchewan. And then, Mr. Speaker, the total volume of dollars in taxes at a reasonable rate will effectively pay the debt down.

That is precisely what Ms. Anderson says, and she is absolutely right — totally, unequivocally right. And she says it probably better than I have, and she says it this way: There are two misconceptions in this administration's view of how to get rid of government debts and deficits. One is that the province's credit rating is based on the size of the debt. It is not. It is based on the ability of the managers of the debt.

(2015)

And, Mr. Speaker, the credit rating in the government that we have here today went down twice already. And my prediction, Mr. Speaker, on the basis of what I see happening in the province today, is it will go down again because the management capacity of this government, without the opportunity for people to create wealth, is not going to deliver a bigger tax base.

A bigger tax base must be encouraged by the people of this government. What do they do to encourage? What do they do to encourage, Mr. Speaker? Jack up taxes. But they had one little window, one little window that they took out and put out there for

everybody to see. One little window, Mr. Speaker, was called harmonization of a certain sector for eight months. Harmonization. That means they're going to get their money back that they pay in taxes.

Now why didn't they do that for everybody? Why not allow that service to be provided to the whole province so that we could have the people in the province of Saskatchewan start to create wealth. That, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why this government, in my opinion, is not going to make it.

I just want to point out some graphs that the government presented to us in their budget address, and it deals with the total volume of debt in the province of Saskatchewan. The total debt in the province of Saskatchewan in 1982 was \$4 billion. And that's their own book saying it. Mr. Speaker, 1982, \$4 billion debt.

What did we have for interest rates in 1982? Does anybody remember? I do. It was very nearly 18 and 19 per cent interest. That, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we have inflation in double digit numbers, we have interest rates in double digit numbers.

And what have we got today, at a time of opportunity in the province of Saskatchewan when investment should come into reality where wealth is created, where wealth is created by individuals in the province of Saskatchewan willing to invest, when we have an interest rate that is at 5.6 per cent prime and an inflation rate that is almost zero.

An Hon. Member: — Except for the government.

Mr. Martens: — And except for the government, as my colleague has said. That's the kind of thing that we need to have in the province of Saskatchewan. We need to free up that money so that individuals will have the right to . . . or the freedom to invest in the province of Saskatchewan.

But what happens to that money, Mr. Speaker? My best guess is that money that isn't tied down in Saskatchewan because of the kinds of functions that occur that would restrict the investment are going to places where they don't have to pay those high taxes. And that, Mr. Speaker, is Alberta.

Why does Alberta's economy seem to move up all the time? Because, Mr. Speaker . . . and British Columbia, for that matter. And I'll say this as . . . not as a credit to the government but to the people of British Columbia. It moves up because it takes dollars invested and earned in Saskatchewan and moves them west.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we need to have very, very careful fiscal planning in the province of Saskatchewan. You cannot tax them above and beyond what they can really afford to pay. And that's what we have gotten to. We have come to the single common denominator in this province, Mr. Speaker, where it's misery — it's misery, misery, misery. And that is the reason why the people of the province of Saskatchewan have a real significant feeling that they

need to move out.

Mr. Speaker, it has become more evident to me today than at any other time; 1993 is a very significant year for me and my family. I have three sons, they're all graduating this year, and one of them is getting married. And, Mr. Speaker, where are they going to find work when they get through their schooling? Where are they going to find opportunities for work? Is it in Saskatchewan? Is there an opportunity to work in Saskatchewan? No, sir. No, sir. They're going to go west. Why? Because they don't like to live in Saskatchewan? No. No, they want to live here. They want the comforts that have been supplied here, but, Mr. Speaker, the job opportunities available in the province of Saskatchewan are not to be found.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the volume of opportunities in Saskatchewan are diminishing every day. Why? Why, Mr. Speaker? Because this government does not understand the fundamentals of business nor of the opportunities for investment that are in the province.

Mr. Speaker, and members of this Assembly, there are a lot of people who have invested dollars very carefully in this province. Mr. Speaker, my family has. They've been in agriculture since 1904 in this province and have invested sweat, money, and all of those things to stay in Saskatchewan. And what do we have, the fourth generation after they moved to Saskatchewan? Leaving. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because the job opportunities are not here, because they cannot invest and get the same kind of benefits here that they would elsewhere. Those are the reasons why I won't be supporting this budget.

On top of that, I see some things that really are striking. Mr. Speaker, I have been . . . prior to the election in 1982, I was a reeve and a councillor and a director with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) for about six years. In that period of time, Mr. Speaker, I became very comfortable with people in local government. And as matter of fact, it was a pleasure for me to serve as a reeve and a councillor and a director of SARM. My brother has been chairman and vice-chairman and sits on the school board in Swift Current and has done so for almost 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, our family has been involved in local government. What do I see as this government's view of helping the local government out? Mr. Speaker, over and over and over again, as I have seen this government deal with its mandate to serve the people of Saskatchewan, it has fiscally offloaded on every one of those agencies that assists the people in rural and urban Saskatchewan. They have offloaded tax dollars on them consistently in the school system, in the health care system, in the municipal system, whether it's urban or rural. They have offloaded on each and every occasion.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, they have not only offloaded, but over and above the taxes that are placed on everybody else, including them, the raise in

the percentage of tax from eight to nine, putting on the additional \$122 million worth of provincial sales tax, add on the clothing that they have to buy, add on the goods and services that they have to now buy through drugs and health care services, add all of that on and then there is a list of things that they have to do over and above that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point some of them out to you as a part of my responsibility as Agriculture critic. I want to point out some of them.

Mr. Speaker, every person who has a . . . Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the now Minister of Environment some of the concerns that the people in rural Saskatchewan have about his environmental taxes that we perceive maybe . . . or fees that are going to be levied against rural Saskatchewan. Clean up your pails, clean up your chemicals, clean up this, and if you don't get it done, here's another tax.

As a matter of fact, I could talk to you about the Pioneer Co-op in Swift Current who have had significant costs imposed on them on environmental clean-up that they had to do, initiated by this minister. And also, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to this minister that there are a whole lot of underground tanks in the province of Saskatchewan that are going to have to be cleaned up. He said, okay I'll give you a break for a year. But, Mr. Speaker, next year is not going to be any better in rural Saskatchewan because they're going to impose some more tax increases and decreases in funding. That is the legacy that these people leave.

I want to point out every person who has livestock in a community pasture, Mr. Speaker, the rates went up. The rates went up across the board. Mr. Speaker, the rates went up to provide services in those community pastures. The rates went up to provide breeding fees for the bulls in those pastures. Mr. Speaker, over and over again the prices went up.

And I'll put another one onto that, Mr. Speaker. Sask Power Corporation across the board made farmers pay up more. Not once in two years. Not twice in two years. In some cases three times in two years; increases in SaskPower rates, increases in gas rates, increases in telephone rates.

As a matter of fact, there is an interesting scenario that has developed, Mr. Speaker, and that is those people who use the telephone service for communications. Let's say they want to transfer the church service from the church into their home now have to pay \$27 a month. What did they pay two years ago, Mr. Speaker? Two years ago what did they pay? Was it \$20? No. Was it \$15? No. It was 11.

In two years, in two years, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel is going to have in excess of \$100 million in reserve. And what do they do? They take it out of the old; they take it out of the senior citizen who can't get out of his house, needs an opportunity to sit and view what the world is doing. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what these people tax over and over again.

I want to point out another thing that is of significance to me and that's the health care system. And I want to point it out because, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan, health region no. 1 began in Swift Current. Mr. Speaker, health region no. 1 began in Swift Current. It began with an investment by municipalities, I believe it was 95 municipalities in the south-west part of the province decided that — that was towns and villages and RMs (rural municipalities) — decided they were going to get together with the doctors and with the provincial government and form a unit to deliver health care, a unit to deliver health care. And it was studied around the world.

In fact my cousins who were taking a medical school in Oklahoma came to Saskatchewan to study the health delivery care system in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. That is the kind of thing that was done over and over again worldwide, Mr. Speaker. And I want to point some things out to you that maybe the members opposite don't know.

Mr. Speaker, who was the government that threw that out? Who was the government that threw that out? Well it was those same people who are now thinking about establishing boards all over the province of Saskatchewan, possibly an effective way to handle health care, effective from their perspective where they can offload over and over again. Mr. Speaker, I want to point this out because it was related to me by a gentleman who was at the meeting in 1977 when the minister of Health, I believe it was Mr. Smishek, came to Swift Current to take and say that this is done.

And who did he have to confront, Mr. Speaker? He had to confront a very important individual who was Speaker of the House at the time, his name was E.I. Wood. And he said to Mr. Smishek, no you're not going to take it away. And Mr. Wood won the day, but he only won the battle, he didn't win the war. And, Mr. Speaker, it was less than a year later and in comes a minister of Health that decides, I'm going to wipe this all away.

You know what they did, Mr. Speaker? This whole idea of district boards kind of fascinates me because I was involved in it from the point of view of being the reeve and the councillor for the municipality of Saskatchewan Landing and I was involved in it. My administrator was involved with it . . . or the administrator from the municipality.

What fascinated me about that, Mr. Speaker, was this: there was a surplus in the fund as it related to health region no. 1. There was a surplus in that fund. What did they do with the surplus, Mr. Speaker? The surplus was there to provide dental care to the children in the areas that they serviced. Mr. Speaker, some years we paid \$7 a year, some years we paid \$20 a year. But, Mr. Speaker, the service provided to the people in that area was sufficient to provide good health care and good dental care. Mr. Speaker, that's what happened.

(2030)

On top of that, the health region no. 1 had a \$900,000 surplus fund. That's the reason, Mr. Speaker, that's the reason in the '50s and the '60s they could operate that health care board in district no. 1. They could operate it efficiently and effectively. Who put the money in there? Who put the money in the health region no. 1? It was taxed by the municipalities, the towns, the cities, and the villages in that health care district. It was taxed there and placed there.

And, Mr. Speaker, each one of those people from those various municipalities, urban and rural, put money into there to have that surplus built up, over \$900,000. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to this Assembly that Mr. Smishek, in his wisdom, decided to take it away. He took it all out of Swift Current health region no. 1 and put it in the Consolidated Fund, and that, Mr. Speaker, is the legacy of these individuals on health care.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very significant opportunity for me to say this because the people of Swift Current know that that is a fact. They know that that is a fact and that is, Mr. Speaker, the reason why these discussions on district health care boards interests me a whole lot.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to each one of the members of this Assembly that the right that the individuals had to tax in 1947, '48, '49, up to 1960 and through 1960 to '75, that same opportunity exists today.

And I say across the board in the province of Saskatchewan, the offloading that is going to take place in the next two years by this government will clearly provide . . . the only opportunity for those people to have a health care service is through property taxes. That's the only place it's going to come from. And that, Mr. Speaker, is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, Mr. Member from Prince Albert, I'm going to tell you this, that that has never been my position and that, Mr. Speaker, is wrong. It was initiated back then by your government, and that, Mr. Speaker, was wrong then.

Health care should be paid for on the basis of a universal tax across the province, not on property. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why I want to raise these issues in this discussion here today. Mr. Speaker, it's important for the people of Swift Current.

And I'm going to tell you something else that's going to happen. There's a health care facility there that is called the Palliser health care centre. And, Mr. Speaker, on Thursday last week, their budget was cut one and a half million dollars. One and a half million dollars, Mr. Speaker. The health care service provided in that centre is a heavy level 4 care facility. And that health care facility is for those people who have absolutely no opportunity to look after themselves.

And as I understand it from the discussion by the administrator and from the people who are the directors on that health care board, they could be losing 35 beds. Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder people

wonder at these people and what they're doing. Is it any wonder they say what in the world is going on?

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point something else to you, that the Premier of this province, the Premier of this province knew that as Mr. Hepworth brought his budget into this House, it was written in his budget book for everyone in the province of Saskatchewan to see, anybody who would have had any sense, who was in this House, would have had an opportunity to read it, but they ignored it. And it said that there was \$14.2 billion worth of debt. And the Premier of the province today says, I can operate this province on \$4.2 billion.

And, Mr. Speaker, he can't operate it. He has not operated it on the basis of the cash that he's had to operate on. He's not operated efficiently.

I want to tell the people in this Assembly that those are the kinds of things that are happening over and over and over again across this province as a result, Mr. Speaker, of the kinds of things that this . . . it's a kind of thing that this government is going to continue to do.

And the reason, Mr. Speaker, the reason is absolutely clear. These people are going to force creativity and wealth out of the province. And who will then stay to pay the tax, Mr. Speaker? That's the fundamental question that has to be answered. Who will pay the tax? Who will pay the tax when you are down to 500 or 600 or 700,000 people. Who will pay the tax?

Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosetown-Elrose said that the only person that's going to leave is me. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've contemplated that a few times, as a matter of fact. One other time when the socialists . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . one other time when the socialist government . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, there was one other time when I thought I should maybe do that. And do you know what I did? I talked it over with my family, and I said, I'm going to go back and I'm going to fight socialism.

And, Mr. Speaker, not only that, I am going to see again whether I can kick it out of the province of Saskatchewan forever. Because on the basis of what they do for fiscal accountability, they have no heart, Mr. Speaker. They have absolutely no heart in what they're doing, and that's the reason why. They are . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll put it this way: the newscaster on CTV (Canadian Television Network) said it probably better than anybody else. He said, there are three problems that Audrey McLaughlin has — the Premier of Ontario; the Premier of Saskatchewan; and the Premier of British Columbia.

And that, Mr. Speaker, that, Mr. Speaker, has driven her in the polls. That, Mr. Speaker, has driven her into the polls to be in that 6 per cent — 6 per cent. Do you know how many people think they've seen Elvis Presley since he died? Twelve per cent.

That, Mr. Speaker, is exactly where Audrey McLaughlin is. That's the kind of role she has to play. And the reason is that the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Premier of Ontario, and the Premier of British Columbia have driven her to that condition. And you go across and ask people across this province whether she isn't in that position. And you will find that is exactly right no matter where you go.

Mr. Speaker, there are a whole lot of things that I could add to this budget debate. But I will give up my place to allow others to do that.

I will be definitely supporting the amendment and I will definitely not be supporting the budget as it has been presented by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to join this evening to take part in this debate. This is a very important debate, Mr. Speaker. It's a very important budget.

And I would like to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain, of course, for the privilege of serving them, but also for their ideas and input over the last year. I, of course, am referring there specifically to my accountability meeting which we on this side of the House do prior to every session and after every session to ensure that we're keeping in touch with our constituents, but also from the business survey that I did, and I'll speak to that in a few minutes. But, Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments specifically on some of the details of the speech, I want to raise two or three points in response to the member from Morse in his comments.

I have a lot of respect for the member for Morse, and over the years I've heard him give some very thoughtful speeches in this Assembly. And I've always kind of respected his point of view, but tonight the example of his concern about summer employment puzzled me. Here is a member who is expressing . . . As he rises to his feet, the first thing he expresses concern about is the fact that in our student summer employment program announced in this budget, called Partnerships '93, where we're looking at providing employment, badly needed employment, to some 2,000 students, the member from Morse expresses a concern that we're giving some preference and some priority in our employment targets to aboriginal and disabled people, young people. Mr. Speaker, I find it amazing that he's concerned about this. I would ask, I suppose, is he opposed to affirmative action.

We heard the member from Athabasca say tonight that in northern Saskatchewan, where 90 per cent of the people are aboriginal, the unemployment is 90 per cent. So I'm sure that the member from Athabasca might have been a little bit concerned when the member from Morse was raising the question as to why there's any preference given to aboriginal students in our summer employment program. I

personally take a lot of pride in that, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure members on this side of the House do. Those are badly needed jobs for aboriginal young people and for all young people.

I guess it's worth reminding the member who was part of cabinet when he was in government, that in order to get a summer job as a student under their administration, you had to have a Tory connection. That is the fact, Mr. Speaker. And last year, for the first time in 10 years, the Public Service Commission took control of those jobs and were given out on the basis of every student in Saskatchewan having an opportunity. The fact that he would raise that concern, I guess, is an indication of why there was virtually no growth in aboriginal or disabled students getting employment in their 10 years. So I'm greatly concerned about that.

The other point I would like to raise in response to his speech is this member from Morse was talking about the misery that his family is experiencing and will experience based on this budget, Mr. Speaker.

He doesn't seem to connect in any way, shape, or form that the \$15 billion, the legacy of that government over the last 10 years, has any implications for his family and thousands of other families next year and over the course of the next several years. There's a relationship between the fact that it cost a lot of money for his adult children to go to university and their \$15 billion debt.

The other issue that he raised that I want to just comment on in passing, talking about our recent . . . this government's recent utility rate increase. Again, Mr. Speaker, they racked up loans and bills with regard to the Shand-Rafferty power plant, and that's what the last increase in utility rates had to do with.

So again, unlike the member from Rosthern who also spoke tonight, where he said that how we got to the \$15 billion debt is irrelevant, well I think the vast majority of Saskatchewan people don't see how we got to that \$15 billion debt or that debt itself as being irrelevant, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, turning directly to the speech . . . or to the budget, I would like to commend the Minister of Finance and my colleagues in cabinet and in the back benches and make a specific reference as well to the former minister of Finance for his tireless efforts in the consultations that went into the budget preparation over the last year.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the minister and my colleagues because there are many ways in which all of us wish we wouldn't have had to make some of the decisions that we made in this budget. Mr. Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan recognizes the financial straits that this province is in. And I commend my colleagues because this is an historic debate. We are in deep difficulty in this province, which is well recognized.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, building on the budget of

last year, this budget, which is a three-year budget, basically will fulfil the promise that we have given to the Saskatchewan public of achieving financial freedom, Mr. Speaker, which has been a hallmark, I might add for members opposite, of CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation)-NDP governments in running this province for some 32 years.

CCF-NDP governments have always balanced the budgets and that's why they've had the flexibility to provide good health care, good social programs, and a good educational system over the years.

(2045)

Mr. Speaker, it is that flexibility that the members opposite have taken away to a large measure in the current situation. We are in a mess. If we had that 700 . . . or 800 now — it's going up like crazy — if we had that \$847 million that we're going to have to pay out this next year in interest, Mr. Speaker, we could double the budget for education. That's the implication of the mess that these people have put us into. For the second year in a row, Mr. Speaker, if we did not have the almost a billion dollar in interest payments that we're having to pay, based on their mess, we would have another surplus budget this year. Even last year there would have been a surplus budget of \$262 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, the government has made the tough choices. They were not easy choices. We had arguments and we agonized and we debated and we consulted with the public. And we agonized over many, many decisions, unlike Manitoba, their colleagues in Manitoba, where without warning they just last week cancelled 52 NGOs' (non-governmental organizations) funding. Well we didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. We didn't cancel funding to 52 NGOs that could ill afford to have their funding cut and were NGOs that provided services to low income people. That wasn't the approach in developing this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'm not going to dwell any more on bashing the opposition. I think it's clearly established in the public mind whose debt this is, except I want to say in closing this part of my speech, is that they had 10 years to implement their ideas — 10 long years. Mr. Speaker, they had 10 long years and the situation got worse every single year. That's a matter of public record.

Not only that they privatized and gave away our resources, whether it's the Potash Corporation or Cameco or the road building equipment or Saskoil. They gave all those assets away, basically. They were open for business and had wheeler-dealers coming in, and the situation got worse every year.

So we lost all those assets and the budgets still continue to go up by over \$1 billion a year, Mr. Speaker. Now all of sudden they've got all the answers. All of a sudden they're like the armchair quarterback, Mr. Speaker. All their answers are so workable today when they weren't workable for 10

long years.

So, Mr. Speaker, the reason I commend the minister and my colleagues, and I would say the people of Saskatchewan because there were extensive consultations that went into developing this budget, is because this three-year plan was developed under unprecedented difficult circumstances.

This challenge has not been easy. The challenge has not been easy but citizens recognize this, Mr. Speaker. And the challenges would have been great enough — that is the challenges confronting our province, our small province and our country, and all countries, Mr. Speaker, had we not had this humungous debt.

The challenges are significant for other reasons, and I'd like to point to just a few of them, which makes it very difficult to develop good economic and social and public policy in today's environment.

Mr. Speaker, changes are occurring at a rapid level. It's almost a cliché but that is true. Things are occurring at such a rapid level it's hard to keep pace and to relate and to understand the new economic order and opportunities that are emerging.

New realities are confronting us, Mr. Speaker. Issues are increasingly complex. There are many circumstances in a small province like Saskatchewan, with a million people or so, that are basically beyond our control.

We're also trying to grapple with the notion that structures and programs and services that were designed for a different era and under different circumstances, require reform.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we've tried to do over the last 16 months is engage in this reform, whether it's the *Partnership for Renewal*, the economic development paper, or the wellness paper, or the study on university education, or SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), or K to 12, is be involved with the public in how those structures and services and programs should change.

And that's the key, Mr. Speaker, is involving those who are delivering the service at the field level, in response to a criticism that the Liberal leader directed at this government last night. That criticism is not well founded, Mr. Speaker. There has been that kinds of consultation.

These seven or eight realities that I've outlined, Mr. Speaker, make positive change and renewal very difficult under the best of circumstances. And this province is facing a crippling debt which makes the challenge all the more tough, and we're trying to face that.

Mr. Speaker, the issues are too serious to play politics with as we've heard in the last two or three weeks here. So the key in Saskatchewan, as we've found out, as we've pioneered many other programs, is to do things the Saskatchewan way. And that's what we

intend to do, which is involving partnerships, consulting, and working together.

We did this before, Mr. Speaker, in 1944. This province had basically been bankrupt at that point in time by previous administration. It was bankrupt then. In 1971 we took over a mess and continued to build during the 1970s. And what, of course the opposition says, is you're always in during the good times. That's no accident, Mr. Speaker. We create the good times, we're part of developing the good times.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Because the opposition has left us in such dire straits, it's going to be tough to do this time, Mr. Speaker, but we are confident that this budget, this three-year budget, will help develop that kind of society that we developed in the '44, post-'44 and post-'71 era. So we can do it again.

Whether they like or not, they had 10 years. The Liberals have been in the wilderness for 20 years. Whether they like it or not, beginning in 1991 and the planning for renewal, journey for renewal — which if the members opposite haven't seen this, I'd be happy to table it and they could read the journey for renewal, the throne speech. And that's a guiding document. *Securing Our Future* — which is the budget speech we're talking about — is the other guiding document. They're the guiding documents for this administration over the next three years.

Back in my riding of Saskatoon Eastview, Mr. Speaker, the . . . and I've touched bases with a lot of constituents in the last. Well I like to think I do that on a regular basis — but certainly in the last two or three weeks I've been in touch with the constituents back home. They recognize that we have in this budget and prior to the budget, with the *Partnership for Renewal*, embarked on a very generous, economic development thrust. And I'll come to some of the economic development projects and the jobs that've been created in a few minutes.

They recognize, Mr. Speaker, back in my riding — I can guarantee you of this — that this government is taking good fiscal planning seriously. And they appreciate that we're looking at a three-year plan to do this, and upfront about that, that we've got the courage to set targets and make the decisions that have to be made.

Mr. Speaker, they recognize as well that as possible, we will get more money from resources. We have always done that. We've used resource money to fund programs and services. We will continue to prioritize doing that as we can, Mr. Speaker. We will continue, as the minister said in her speech, to work towards and press the federal government to help us work towards a fair taxation system so loopholes can be closed.

We're not happy about the fact that 2,000 high income Saskatchewan taxpayers paid no income tax last year. That's a federal matter that we're going to have to pursue and we will do that. We support

people paying on the basis of the ability to pay, Mr. Speaker. That is a cornerstone and always has been a CCF-New Democratic policy.

Mr. Speaker, people back home recognize that our health care plan, the wellness plan . . . because it's working effectively back home and we're proud of Cliff Wright and the board and the staff who have worked very hard to unfold the health care agenda where basically we have rationalized a number of the services. And, Mr. Speaker, despite the potential job losses last year, there have only been 12 people in the last year in Saskatoon who have lost their jobs due to health care reform.

So the message to the members opposite is, if you join in the wellness development and work with your communities and the districts, you can help convert those hospitals to wellness centres and keep the jobs and enhance the services. That's what the wellness program is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — And, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that in many ways services in Saskatoon have been enhanced, health care services. People in Saskatoon Eastview recognize that there's a compassion side of this budget. It isn't everything that I would like to see. I'm not happy about increasing the deductibles on the drug plan. I'm not happy about a raise of 1 per cent in the PST (provincial sales tax). I'm not happy about the adding the 9 per cent PST on adult clothing. And we will deal with that as we are able to, Mr. Speaker.

But they recognized that this year some \$15 million goes specifically into a compassionate package for low income people. Next year it's 32, the year after it's 112 million. Because people know that when we can deal with the compassionate aspects, we will do that as quickly as we can. But unless we get our financial house in order, there won't be a health care system. And that isn't an exaggeration, Mr. Speaker, and my constituents know that.

I spent the pleasurable, a very pleasurable day in Tisdale . . . a little bit of outreach, curling up at Tisdale last Saturday, Saturday evening, my wife and I. And, Mr. Speaker, the people in Tisdale are not unhappy with this government but they're pretty angry with the last government. It's the last government they're angry with, Mr. Speaker, and of course they basically view the Liberal leader as irrelevant in this forum.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday, last Friday, I sat here and listened to the Leader of the Opposition talk about how mad everybody was across the province about this budget. So I had the good fortune to tune in to the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) phone-in show on the way home. And of course I listened to that part way home and then there was another phone-in show, CJWW in Saskatoon, CKCK in Regina, sort of a hook-up across the province where the Premier was on that program.

Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of public record, and I'll

just give you a bit of a sampling of what I heard in that program and I'm sure that the members opposite tuned in as well. But, for example, Dale Botting, Federation of Independent Business, well some things he was happy about, some things he wasn't. But what he said was that the government accepted five of their recommendations. Now that's not too bad. They did fairly well, five of their recommendations we implemented right now. So that's, that's listening, I think to the small-business sector.

A gentleman by the name of Bob, I think he was from . . . I don't know where he was from, it wasn't me, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Speaker, he said that, quote: in the long run this is a positive budget. It's a road-map with clear measurements, quote, unquote. A gentleman by the name of Carl, again he was angry with the members opposite, said: this budget is a responsible approach to the desperate situation we're in, quote, unquote.

Another caller said, quote: the opposition can't have it all ways, they want no cuts, no tax increases and they want to keep the services and pay off the debt, quote, unquote. A caller by the name of Cheryl said: privatization by the former government is how we got this debt racked up, it's their debt. It's got to be dealt with, quote, unquote.

Mr. Hewitt Helmsing, from Regina, executive director of the Saskatchewan Health Care Association, on the CBC phone-in show talked of the opportunity for meaningful health care reform and indicated that people's health needs in Saskatchewan are being met and will be met. He goes on further, Mr. Speaker — and I'd like the members opposite to listen if they didn't hear him — he goes on further to say that the health districts will make their own decisions with regards to closures or conversions to health centres. And they will better utilize, by doing so they will better utilize the available money. Hewitt Helmsing — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Helmsing isn't doom and gloom. He sees the potential for enhanced health care, for local decision making, and for doing it within the fiscal constraints of the province in order to save the system.

Another caller, Mr. Speaker, said: I think this government is wisely spending our money. And I'm not making that up. That was public airways, Mr. Speaker. Well I was driving along taking notes, and so I hope my wife isn't watching here, but it's a double highway and no traffic was coming this way. But those are direct quotes, Mr. Speaker.

(2100)

Now also a couple of quotes from the CJWW-CKCK hook-up where the Premier was on the line. A woman by the name of Joyce commended the Premier and the Minister of Finance for a budget going in the right direction. Now she talked a bit about, as we could, making sure that we hit those who could afford to pay. And of course the Premier assured her that that was our objective.

A gentleman by the name of David approved of the approach that the government is taking and talked about having fewer MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly). Again the Premier indicated that he's considering very seriously a public debate about how many fewer MLAs there should be. A Regina caller, Mr. Speaker, said that: finally we've got a government that's willing to make the tough decisions and get the financial house in order. And, Mr. Speaker, the last person I will quote because I could go on and on — there were several callers — last but not least was a caller from Swift Current who said . . .

An Hon. Member: — Good old Swift Current.

Mr. Pringle: — Good old Swift Current, my colleague says, who says: the government's doing a good job; she's very pleased with the provincial government. Those are her comments, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, my point here is that the public is ready to face the realities facing this small province of Saskatchewan. This is not true for the opposition, the official opposition who got us in this mess. This is not true for the third-party Liberal member from Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, and they should get aboard, because look who's gotten a aboard here. Crown Life, Crown Life was willing to help us get out of about 50 or \$60 million of loan guarantees. Weyerhaeuser, \$150 million and were willing to assist to get us out of about 45 to \$50 million in loan guarantees. Now they can afford to, but the fact is they joined. They joined because they're here. They joined the province. Doctors had agreed upon a cut in fees over the next, this year and next year. OPEIU (Office and Professional Employees International Union), labour movement accepted their responsibility by agreeing to zero, zero and 2.5, I think. So, Mr. Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan is ready to deal with the realities facing the province. And the sooner we deal with them, the sooner they know that this government will have the financial flexibility to rebuild and renew the programs that are important to the people of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — So the issue is too serious for political posturing. And, Mr. Speaker, I know the temptation to do this.

Now I was at home last night. I had some meetings in Saskatoon yesterday. I was listening to the third-party Liberal leader in her speech. And I have to mention two or three things that she referred to, Mr. Speaker, because I think that it's time to call her on some of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader talked about . . . well she mentioned some time ago that she would be giving the government an idea per week on how to generate economic activity in this province and create

jobs. Now I checked with the Minister of Economic Development tonight, and she has not submitted one idea yet. So, Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap, but we're looking for her constructive ideas, specifically about how to generate employment.

Mr. Speaker, she talked about going back to the drawing board. The budget's not good enough; go back to the drawing board. But what are her ideas on going back to the drawing board? The only thing she said was, involve the people at the field level. Well we're doing that, Mr. Speaker. We're involving the people in the departments on how to create efficiencies and how to make services more effective. I mean she's a way behind in that. We're doing that already, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think the thing that bothered me the most about the Liberal leader, the third-party leader's comments last night, is her joke that you might remember, Mr. Speaker, where she was talking about asking an accountant what is two and two, and the lawyer, and then she talked about asking the public servant. And the public servant apparently said, what do you want them to be?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I had two calls from public servants who found that very offensive, that the leader, albeit a third party, but the leader of the party who professes a new ethic, who talks to the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) people on the steps about what a good supporter she is of people in the public service, would so disregard the public officials and the public servants that she would say that they will tell us anything you want to hear.

Now she was a public servant herself. And I don't think she would feel that it would be very respectful if somebody in this Assembly would view that that's the kind of public servant she was.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope she apologizes to the public servants, that they just will tell her what she wants to hear. They are competent, independent public servants who are professionals and we're going to professionalize the public service again, Mr. Speaker, after those people politicized them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader also said last night that the government should begin at home to look for efficiencies and she mentioned that the cost of running the legislature is up \$18,000 in the budget.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I presume that she didn't look at the budget as a whole because what she has missed is that \$130,000 from Property Management Corporation was moved from there over to the legislature for security. The security budget was moved over to the legislature.

There was an offsetting decrease in the Property Management budget, Mr. Speaker, so you can't pick and choose where you want to make a political point.

That is the reason there's an increase on the books. But she has to look at the whole budget as a whole.

Now I assume that — I'll give her the benefit here — I'll assume that she's trying not to make political points and that she just didn't look at Property Management to see that there was a corresponding decrease there.

The other point I would raise is she talked about the legislature expenditures being up. Again, Mr. Speaker, if you look at what's in the budget on that, you will note that there's \$110,000 that's been added to the Ombudsman's office. That's the reason for the increase there.

Now we're talking about . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes we increased the budget of the Ombudsman which provides a greater watchdog function, greater scrutiny to the public service. And, Mr. Speaker, what's wrong with that? We're proud of that.

We want better scrutiny. That's what the Gass Commission report and the adoption of those recommendations and the strengthening of the accounting system is all about. If you're an accountable government you'll run an efficient government. That's what we're trying to accomplish.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would think that the member from Greystone, if she looks at why that legislature expenses are up, it's the — we'll help her out here — it's the Ombudsman's office and we don't apologize for that.

The last thing I would say, Mr. Speaker, is when you come into a forum like this, and I detect a certain amount of intolerance by the Liberal leader as she looks with some scorn at people like me on the back benches and suggests that we're not playing a meaningful role; that all we do is sit here and raise our hands for votes.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that anybody who comes in with the view that their ideas are the only ones that are correct and their analyses are the only correct analyses, and who basically dismisses the experience and the training and the education and the expertise and the judgements of colleagues no matter what side they're on, anybody who comes in with that attitude, Mr. Speaker, will not function very well here on behalf of the public. This place has to work together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, 95 per cent of the Bills that are passed in this Assembly, at least in the last five years that I've been here, have been done basically by people working together from all sides of the House.

And so it's not that intolerance and that sense of if you're on the back benches of the government you're not contributing. I think my colleagues and myself find that very offensive. We're out there just as much as she is, talking to constituents. In fact I get several calls from her riding, partly because I used to

represent about 3,000 voters there. But I get a lot of calls from her riding, and I try and respond to them as best I can.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the doom and gloom that we heard last night from the Liberal leader and also from the member from Morse and Rosthern tonight, I'm aware that on March 19 there was a forum in Moose Jaw on the economy. I heard this on the radio on Friday and I assume this is accurate.

The Bank of Montreal is saying that they are optimistic, cautiously optimistic about the economy of the province of Saskatchewan. In fact their south-east Saskatchewan agricultural minister said agriculture support needs priority given to research and development and to value added processing.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the budget, it talks in some detail about research and development with new money. Several millions of dollars going into research and development in the agricultural sector and value added processing. Now would they suggest that that's in the wrong track? That's sustainable development, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Economic Council of Canada is optimistic about the province of Saskatchewan. And they're aware of our debt situation. The Conference Board of Canada is, the Royal Bank is. We don't apologize on this side of the House that Isabel Anderson doesn't like what we're doing. We're not going to apologize for that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that on behalf of the business people in Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain . . . and I would like to thank them tonight, as I have individually, but thank them tonight for participating in my fifth annual business survey which I do prior to every spring. I forwarded those recommendations from the business community to the Minister of Economic Development, the Minister of Finance, the Premier, in fact to all my colleagues.

And, Mr. Speaker, basically I would like to just make a few comments from that survey because I think that, as I found out last week in Saskatoon and on Monday in Saskatoon, the business community — and I can take Market Mall with some 90 merchants — are not unhappy with this government. I can tell the member from Morse to go into Market Mall in Saskatoon where 300 people are employed. In fact there are more than that, about 400 people employed, including 170 new positions this spring, 170 new positions, Mr. Speaker, 170 new positions in Market Mall in the last four or five months.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Well the member from Morse is shaking his head. I challenge him to go into Market Mall and meet with the people over breakfast like I did, Mr. Member, which I do on a regular basis.

And basically this is what they're saying. On that survey of mine I had a rate of return of 19 per cent

which Dale Botting tells me is very good. The average length of the current business in my survey was 12.5 years. We're talking about business people who have been around for a while, 7.5 employees average.

Mr. Speaker, one of the questions I had was how do your staff numbers compare to one year ago. Well, Mr. Speaker, 10 per cent more businesses increased their staff than decreased their staff in the last year, but 45 per cent of the business people, their staff remained the same. But 35 per cent of them increased the number of staff they've hired in the last year. Well that doesn't sound to me like a doom-and-gloom situation.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to retail sales, in this survey in Eastview-Haultain the average retail sale in '92 compared to '91 was up on the average of \$30,000 per business or 6.6 per cent on the average business.

Mr. Speaker, basically the obstacles relating to your business success, while a weak economy: federal GST — talk to your federal people; provincial debt, which is your legacy; taxes in general — that amounts to 75 per cent of their concern. Mr. Speaker, this government decreased their business taxes for the second year in a row have been 1 per cent. And they appreciate that.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker . . . and I won't read into the record the other, the plans for creating jobs and strengthening our economy; other members have, and I could table this card for the member from Morse and he could look at it as well. But there are five or six points that are very key to business generation in the province related to the business corporate tax cut by 20 per cent, the manufacturing and processing tax credit for co-ops and small business, the 51 million research and development of high-tech, tourism and so on, and the 160 in the capital projects, not to mention 320 in terms of support for agriculture.

And those are things, Mr. Speaker, that the business people in Market Mall, which I'm speaking about . . . where some 90 merchants believe that we are responding to their concerns.

(2115)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll just turn to the last page, and this is a study that I'd be very happy to provide to the opposition. But when asked, what is the current health or viability of your business — and it's a question I ask every year, so I compare year to year — 80 per cent of the respondents in my riding say that their current business viability is either fair, good, or very good — 80 per cent — with 40 per cent being either good or very good.

Then I asked them, what is your projection of the future viability of your business? And this is where the optimism and not the doom and gloom pervades in the real world, out there where business people are operating. In my constituency, their view of their future business viability, 50 per cent say it's good to very good. Mr. Speaker, in Eastview-Haultain, 50 per cent of the respondents, the business respondents, say

that their future business viability is either good or very good. That's incredible. Thirty-five per cent say fair.

Mr. Speaker, this government is supporting small business and listening to small business.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — New Careers will develop 1,500 jobs, student summer — Partnership '93, 2,000, over and above the *Partnership for Renewal*. And, Mr. Speaker, I would just add — and I won't go over these, but in terms of economic development projects that I'm sure the Minister of Economic Development has tabled, but again responding specifically to the Liberal Leader last night who's saying that there are no jobs in this province, and also to the doom and gloom we heard tonight — I will send this over to the member from Morse.

But there's a list of 18 projects here over the last year that have come on stream over the last year. And, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, they're not all your projects, I can assure you of that. I'll send it over to you.

But let me say to you and the Liberal leader, there are 17 projects here. These represent 1,600 new jobs. They represent an investment of \$270 million.

Mr. Speaker, this is not doom and gloom. Small-business people are continuing to be creative and innovative and find niches for themselves and they're looking for government support to do that, and that's what we're trying to respond to.

An Hon. Member: — How many loan guarantees there?

Mr. Pringle: — Well in this one there are really no loan guarantees because we're not doing that any more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — The days of putting up . . . the days of giving away our assets, putting up . . . taking all the risk for big megaprojects, guaranteeing their loans, are gone, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — As the Premier said, the priority with this government is shifting to Main Street, Saskatchewan. This budget reflects that.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to go back just for a moment to talk about health care reform in Saskatoon. And I say this very sincerely because I know the member from Morse is concerned in a very sincere way about health care reform and the concern about this Bill with the districts.

Mr. Speaker, we have a district in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give the member a couple of

examples of where positions have not been lost. We've been able to empty out hospital beds. People have had service in their home in an enhanced basis.

Now he's nodding his head so he's not even willing to listen. But I'm going to read this . . . I'm going to say this anyway . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well this is true. This is true.

In Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, there are about . . . historically there are about 500 people per year go into the hospital, spend 30 days there each — that's 3,000 hospital days — and they lie there and get intravenous IV.

What the health board did, Mr. Speaker, with the support of the hospital administration and the nursing staff, is that they converted some nursing positions, some outreach positions. No jobs were lost.

Now what happens is that people get their intravenous IV at home, in their own home where they feel more comfortable. It's an enhanced service in their own home. And we've converted, changed, evolved, and shaped the roles of the health care professionals. That's what the potential is of health care reform.

That's a small example. But another example is now, Mr. Speaker, if a woman goes into the hospital to have her baby, normally the length of stay has been five days. Now there is the opportunity to go home after two days, and many women are choosing to do that. But instead of going home to be by themselves, they've converted nursing positions to following those women home with their babies, to visit them every day to provide the kind of support again in their homes.

Again they've got economies in health care beds, in hospital beds, expensive beds. They are providing a service in people's own homes, and, Mr. Speaker, they are saving positions, converting positions. And there are several other examples where they've gone to central purchasing and saved millions of dollars in central purchasing for the institutions there.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, in the last year only 12 people . . . and I don't say that 12 people should have lost their job — but the health board has been able to save and phase in by adaptations and changes and innovations and new program initiatives all but 12 people out of a hundred-and-some who would have lost their jobs.

So converting to a wellness centre where you've got an enhanced service doesn't mean you lose jobs. That's a scare tactic. We can't build the system and restructure the program, Mr. Speaker, with those kinds of scare tactics that aren't relevant anyway.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to acknowledge — as I think my colleagues have — that this is a tough budget the minister did. I don't feel good about 400 public servants losing their jobs. Those are my neighbours and your neighbours. Those are losses

of jobs. Nobody supports that. I don't feel good about that. Mr. Speaker, those are tough losses.

But I don't want the members sitting there and saying they had nothing to do with this. Mr. Speaker, there's a relationship between a \$15 billion debt, which is their legacy which is growing every day, because the public of Saskatchewan knows that the debt is set over here and is piling up at the tune of about \$2 million a day on interest . . . What this government is trying to do is to deal with just the operating deficit, and their interest payment is over \$800 million a year. We haven't even begun to deal with the debt yet. That is their legacy totally. Now the public knows that.

But I don't feel good about those job losses, Mr. Speaker, and I'm hoping that a number of those people can be absorbed over time into meaningful employment and to some of the other initiatives that will be created. We need their help in giving those people some hope too.

This budget is a three-year plan. What you see there is what you get. That isn't to say that we fully comprehend all the implications next year or the year after. Other levels of government will make their own decisions.

We subscribe to the principle that the closer you are to your community, the better informed you'll be and the better involved you can be with your community to make the decisions that are in the best interests of you. The more responsive . . . you can tell your programs to be more effective, then you can provide more efficient services.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, time will tell, it will be measured in due course, but we'll secure the future. We'll secure the economic and financial future of the province. It will allow us the financial freedom to rebuild the drug plan the way we would like to see it and the income security plan for low income people.

And remember, Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Saskatoon, the Minister of Social Services, has already announced that there are SAP increases for low income families.

There are FIP (Family Income Plan) increases in this budget. Increases for seniors. The compassionate package as best we can do. And people trust us on the issue of compassion, because that has been our record in this province, Mr. Speaker.

As best we can we will rebuild, as quickly as we can. As I say, from this year to year three we, by about seven or eight times, we increased the compassion package as we get better financial freedom.

The Prime Minister . . . their Prime Minister acknowledges this as a tough budget, but it's the way to go. The Liberal Premier McKenna of New Brunswick says it's a responsible budget. Mr. Wells has a very similar budget in Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, the critical . . . Well the people of

Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You haven't been listening. I'm just telling you that you should have listened to the radio show the other day. You should have been up to Tisdale on Saturday. The people of Saskatchewan are not doom and gloom like you. They've got faith in each other and they've got faith in their province and they've got faith in their government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — I'll just say, Mr. Speaker, this budget has a . . . And that's what they're worried about. What they're worried about, what they're worried about, Mr. Speaker, is that we're going to be so successful in generating jobs that they won't be able to stand it. And we're going to get their financial mess under control. That's what they're worried about. But that's what we're going to do. That's what the public wants us to do. That's what they elected us to do, Mr. Speaker.

We will have the financial freedom. We will create the employment. There are many initiatives here for small business. And I will proudly go back into my small-business community this weekend as I did last weekend, Mr. Speaker. There is a progressivity factor, not as great as we'd like to see, but there is a progressivity factor on the drug deductibles. And we will monitor and sort out, we will monitor and sort out the issues as they can. And the Minister of Health has guaranteed that people who need drugs will be able to get drugs. We guarantee that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is also in this budget . . . well I could go on and on, but the increases, there's a priority, a clear priority in mental health, increases to home care for seniors to live independently, there is money for child care.

Mr. Speaker, the government has taken the leadership role to get its own house in order and I'm not going to go over all of the cuts that were made at the senior levels in the political system or here, but those have been highlighted by other people. But most importantly about this budget, Mr. Speaker, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, I will proudly support this budget, Mr. Speaker, and I've identified, I've identified the areas that cause me some concern and we're very open and honest about that. The Minister of Finance has done that as well. But within our ability this is a responsive budget. It's a responsible and a compassionate budget as best we can, Mr. Speaker, as best we can manage at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, we are on the road to recovery and I'm confident that we'll be judged in three years time with a new mandate, Mr. Speaker, and this will have been the turning point. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's with a great

deal of pride in our province and in our government that I rise today, or should I say tonight, to address the budget. The long-term plan which we have presented will continue the journey of renewing our great province.

This is a plan, Mr. Speaker, developed from our government's commitment to the social values of cooperation, community, humanitarianism, equality, and social justice. It is a plan which will allow us to secure our future by regaining control of our financial affairs. It is a plan, Mr. Speaker, which will enable us to improve the economic and social conditions of all Saskatchewan people.

But this plan, Mr. Speaker, was not developed easily. Our need to struggle with the horrible fiscal mess left by the previous government, combined with the unmet social needs, brought out the commitment to social democracy in everyone on the government side of the House. All caucus members spent countless hours consulting with their communities, listening to people's concerns and to their hopes and their dreams of the future.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan understand the difficult choices which this government has made. My heartfelt congratulations go to the people of Saskatchewan and to the members of the government caucus for their combined efforts to renew Saskatchewan. Leadership, Mr. Speaker, is the ability to take the steps needed to address the problems at hand. Leadership requires the ability to perform an honest assessment of the problems, to assess values and to assess the resources available to address the problems.

Effective leadership is the ability to create a vision for people, to give them a feeling that these problems can and will be overcome. And with this budget, Mr. Speaker, we are developing this feeling with the people of Saskatchewan.

(2130)

Let's briefly examine the leadership of the previous administration. Their assessment of the problem was that big business did not have enough freedom in the province. Their so-called response to the problem was to announce that we are open for business and to subsidize big business. So year after year they dumped millions, and I mean millions of dollars into megaprojects. They believed in trickle-down economics, Mr. Speaker. Did they ever stop once and ask themselves about their plan? Well apparently not. Instead they continued to dump even more millions into wasteful projects.

Mr. Speaker, let's compare their leadership with the leadership of this government. During the last year we performed an honest and thorough assessment of the economic problems facing Saskatchewan people, and we examined the resources available to us to address these problems.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Economic

Development, hundreds of consultation meetings took place throughout the province and a strategy for the Saskatchewan economy was developed entitled, *Partnership for Renewal*. It is a fundamental recognition that everyone in the province has an investment in the economy. The agricultural sector, rural municipalities, cities, workers, unions, students, small and large business, and those unemployed or receiving social assistance. We are all, Mr. Speaker, all partners in the journey of renewal. This, Mr. Speaker, is a partnership.

And leadership, Mr. Speaker, is the ability to recognize problems and have the courage to make the necessary changes. This sort of leadership characterizes the Minister of Health's wellness plan. She has recognized that continued investment in a sickness model would lead to the complete dismantling of our health care system. She has demonstrated, along with our government colleagues, the courage to move medicare to the second phase, to reorganize and revamp the entire delivery system.

The new approach to health care is seen by this government as a challenge, problems which we will overcome to ensure that Saskatchewan residents have the best health care system in North America.

I only wish to mention it briefly, Mr. Speaker, because our province is putting its nightmare behind it, but in addition to its record for nine years, the Tories punished the poor and disadvantaged people of this province. For nine years they rang up massive deficits through mismanagement and corporate give-aways while at the same time blaming social programs for the deficit. This was a shameful deceit. The Tories' budgets came from the values of social Darwinism, from a view of the world in which the powerful have a right to plenty and those who have little should not expect more. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a member of a government which rejects those beliefs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The people of Saskatchewan also reject the punitive actions of the previous government. Mr. Speaker, there are people in our society who have previously been forced to live on the outside. Who are these people? Well they are those looking for work, those living in poverty, the physically and emotionally disabled, often children, sometimes senior citizens, many times young mothers raising children alone, and the frustrated and lonely adolescent often facing prejudices.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government is working with communities to reduce the hurt and the isolation of those people. Our government understands the conditions in which they live and our government is committed to changing those conditions. Since being appointed Minister of Social Services and minister responsible for Seniors, I have met with hundreds of individuals and organizations throughout our province.

I am continually touched by the true sense of caring possessed by so many Saskatchewan people. I am thinking of those people who give so much to their communities and they are rarely profiled in the media. And often, Mr. Speaker, most often they do not receive any kind of recognition. So, Mr. Speaker, the public is often not aware of their endeavours. They quietly contribute their time and energy to change the lives of others. And in this day of cynicism and criticism I wish to assure this House that the struggle to help one another continues in this province, Mr. Speaker. Yes, people do see themselves as their brother's and sister's keeper.

Mr. Speaker, under the Tories the Department of Social Services was chronically underfunded. They not only punished the powerless people in our province, but they also criticized those who serve them. We inherited a department stretched beyond its capacity to provide supportive services and employees who were afraid to speak their minds on behalf of their clients and themselves.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those days are over. I have met with almost every front-line social worker and support staff in the province of Saskatchewan and I have encouraged each and every one of them to speak freely on behalf of themselves and the people they serve.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this invites criticism. I believe that a government and in government that we must encourage the expression of ideas. This is democracy. We will not muzzle employees as was done by the previous government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of the people who work for the Department of Social Services have the best interests of the people they serve at heart. This House recently heard second reading of The Social Workers Act, an Act which acknowledges the unique education and skills of a social worker.

This Act should also lay a foundation from which the professional association will advocate on behalf of the powerless people of our province. The people of Saskatchewan have always held a strong sense of compassion towards disadvantaged people. We were offended by the cruel policies of the 1980s. Our people in the province understand the principle of fairness and support of social policy initiatives. In fact, Mr. Speaker, even with fewer resources than in the 1980s, this government will do more to improve the condition of poor and disadvantaged people in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that in this budget the Department of Social Services will receive an \$18.5 million increase in the 1993-1994 budget year. Effective July 1, 1993, the minimum basic allowance for children in families

receiving social assistance will increase from \$155 to \$160 a month.

The rates of \$195 for the first child of a single parent, which was established last year, will not change. In a time when we are faced with horrendous conditions in this province, we on this side of the House and all government members have made a concerted effort to make sure that the children of the most disadvantaged people in this province are protected.

There will also, Mr. Speaker, be an increase of \$5 per child per month for children of low income, working families who are receiving Family Income Plan support. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that not once in the last several years has this plan been increased, but our government was committed to ensuring that children living in low income, working families would receive further support, and we're proud of that fact.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, most importantly, we have received additional monies in this year's budget to introduce a more broadly based children's safety net program for children of low income, working families. Our department is working very hard in consultation with the community and Ottawa to ensure that we have a new children's benefit that will broaden the number of children that receive income support in this family, and that is another commitment introduced in this budget and a commitment of our government.

Over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, many families have had to use food money to pay for their utilities. This government has targeted \$720,000 to begin to pay actual utility costs. Once again, Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that people in this province who receive income security will not have to take money from their food budget, which is the only flexibility they have in terms of their income support, to pay for utilities. We think this is one way, one small way to help in addressing child hunger.

While these increases, Mr. Speaker, are modest for families receiving social services, when looking at the fiscal deficit they show our government's commitment to protect the most vulnerable people in society. And for that, Mr. Speaker, I am truly grateful and truly proud.

Mr. Speaker, we are also continuing to fund the community-based children's nutrition and development program. Grants which support urban and rural communities providing nutrition programs for hungry children, addressing the long-term causes of hunger, and enhancing the well-being of disadvantaged children will total \$1 million in 1993-94. This is an increase in support of child hunger and to support those people in the community who are attempting to deal with child hunger of over 35 per cent since our election in October of 1991 — another new initiative on our government's behalf, an initiative that we are also very proud of.

We are focusing our efforts on early intervention and prevention, Mr. Speaker. The teen parent program will receive \$290,000 for program expansion, and the development of high school infant care centres for teen parents. With 33 new infant spaces in the 1992-93 budget, our funding for the teen parent infant day care program now totals over one-half million dollars.

And education, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely key to ensuring that teen moms and their children avoid long-term dependency on our income security programs. A mother's education, Mr. Speaker, is one of the key factors in determining what will happen to her children. Enhanced programs such as this will assist teenagers to stay in school and strengthen their parenting skills. Once again, Mr. Speaker, another initiative that our government is extremely proud of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, we have also committed over \$1 million in this budget to support in-home initiatives for family support services including children with disabilities. Further details on these programs will be announced as we want to go through a consultation with the community and various stakeholder representatives.

We are also working extremely hard, along with the aboriginal community, towards aboriginal control of services to native children and their families.

Mr. Speaker, difficult decisions had to be made with this budget. Tackling the fiscal crisis head on meant that not everyone would have had their needs met. The Seniors' Secretariat and the Senior Citizens' Provincial Council have been eliminated. In making these changes a guiding principle was to target our scarce resources to those most in need. Saskatchewan Income Plan, which is a plan in support of seniors, will continue at the higher rates introduced last October. Health coverage for low income seniors will be continued for optometric, chiropractic, and other health programs, and services such as the many changes under the Saskatchewan aids to independent living program. Some changes have been made to the prescription drug plan which will affect Saskatchewan Income Plan clients and seniors receiving the federal guaranteed income supplement. The deductible for married or single seniors receiving Saskatchewan Income Plan, or SIP benefits, will now be \$100 every six months and a 35 per cent co-payment after the deductible is reached will continue.

For seniors receiving the federal guaranteed income supplement and living in special care homes, the deductible will be \$100 every six months followed by the 35 per cent co-payment. The deductible for married or single seniors receiving the federal guaranteed income supplement will now be \$200 every six months followed by the 35 per cent co-payment. In addition to these provisions, any seniors whose drug costs are high in relation to their

income may qualify for the special support program through Saskatchewan Health. As the Minister responsible for Seniors, I will continue to work with seniors and our senior organizations to ensure that their views are represented in government.

(2145)

Mr. Speaker, our social policy initiatives need to be compared with recent announcements in Manitoba. This is how the Tories east of us are dealing with their deficit. They announced a \$6 million reduction in funding to day care centres, foster parents, and child welfare agencies. They announced that the foster parents' basic support per child would be reduced by 10 per cent. Day care spaces, parent subsidies, and operating grants were all reduced. There has also been a \$1.2 million cut in funding to 11 friendship centres, and, Mr. Speaker, they apparently cut \$3 million by cutting services to 56 advocacy groups in the province of Manitoba. So we can see, Mr. Speaker, that Tories in Saskatchewan created a massive deficit and punished poor people. Tories in Manitoba now address their deficit by also punishing poor people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to the Tories opposite and to the Tories in Manitoba, shame on them. This is not the direction of this government. Our government has a deep sense of its historical roots. When faced with adversity in the 1900s, rural people in Saskatchewan developed cooperatives. Working people created unions, and small businesses adapted their products. Their objective was to gain control over their lives and serve the people of their province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the objective of our budget. We are going to work with cooperatives, labour, and small business, along with working people and disadvantaged people to once again gain control over our financial affairs. Our long-term goal is to meet the long-term needs of all Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a journey of renewal and I contribute my wholehearted support to this budget. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for that warm welcome, and congratulate the previous member, the Minister of Social Services, on her excellent presentation of some very good news that was contained in this budget, the budget delivered by the Minister of Finance some short days ago. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to once again rise and speak on behalf of my constituents, the wonderful people in Regina Albert North, as well as I might venture to speak on behalf of other family and friends right across the province. I must say I'm delighted to be speaking about this year's budget, this budget that's titled *Securing Our Future*, and that's what it is all about, Mr. Speaker. It's about the future of

our province and the future of our youth.

Indeed on budget day as you would know, this floor was filled with people and there was a chair . . . chairs all along here. There was a young gentleman sitting next to me, and after we had adjourned for the day I introduced myself to him, and was simply delighted with his interest in the budget and his acceptance of the message, his understanding of the situation that we are all faced, his desire to be part of the solution not part of the problem, his desire to live in Saskatchewan, to continue to make his province, our province, home.

So, Mr. Speaker, in a spur of the moment — wonderful idea, I think — I signed my budget address booklet to him, and I put, “Best wishes for your future, the future that this budget is all about.”

It’s about hope and it’s about more than that. This budget is about creating jobs and strengthening our economy. This budget is about compassion, much of the compassion that was addressed so well in the previous member’s speech. This budget is about controlling government spending. It’s about a government that is serious about striking a balance between revenue and expenditure. It’s about rationalizing the delivery of services in Saskatchewan. It’s about doing things better, doing more with less. Not to be confused with the campaign slogan of the current MP (Member of Parliament) for Regina-Lumsden whose first campaign when he was running against a Liberal by the name of Jim Moore, and the MP said, get more with less. And that was his campaign slogan. And he did it and has served the constituency for the past 25-plus years.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is also — and this is perhaps key in the turning point — this budget is about turning the corner to balancing the provincial budget within four years. Balancing a budget that hasn’t been balanced since the last budget that the former premier . . . and I’m talking about Allan Blakeney, not the member for Estevan, the former member for Regina Elphinstone — that was the last balanced budget presented in this Legislative Assembly.

I am proud as a New Democrat to say I was in support of that government. They did some very wonderful things. That’s the inheritance that we feel, on the government side of the House now, is we want to do what we can to follow in the footsteps of the great socialist, Democratic Socialist governments that came before us. And you know, Mr. Speaker, there’s a little more about that later in my speech but I think I am convinced that we are living up to that.

The frustration that we’ve all felt with our fiscal situation, Mr. Speaker, I think begins partly because we have said, you know, when we formed the government that the deficit for that year was \$960 million. And in the first five months that we were in office, we reduced the deficit by \$114 million. So the deficit for that year was some \$846 million, but it was still a deficit. And then we reduced the deficit yet again in our first budget to the point where, in

1992-93, we reduced the deficit from 960 million to \$592 million. And, Mr. Speaker, there are individuals who take that to believe that we paid down some \$300 million of debt. And of course that is light-years from the truth. What we did last year was spent \$592 million more than we had income. We were \$592 million in arrears last year.

The frustration stems from the government trying to get out the good news of where we’re able to save money. A small example that comes to mind that was something of an election issue — and we did it right away — was we started mailing SaskPower and SaskEnergy billings in one envelope instead of two, and that saved something like a half a million dollars, \$500,000 a year.

Now that’s again a long, long, long way from balancing the budget, but those are the sorts of measures that we have taken, trying to do more with less. And the feeling that because we’re reducing the deficit we’re somehow buying down the \$15 billion debt leads to a frustration.

I’ve actually had some individuals express their frustration that we’re somehow paying off the debt all at once much too quickly, when in fact even with this budget that reduces the annual deficit from \$592 million to \$296 million — cuts it in half — we’re still this year spending \$296 million, or projecting to spend that, more than we have revenue, more than we have income.

So what we’re saying is, look we’re not buying down the debt at all, but we have to achieve an annual balance before we can even consider making that decision about whether to buy down debt or whether to spend money on increased programing or whatever. But we’re still, it looks like at least three years from that with this projection, this plan. It’s going to be 1996-97 when we have a \$20 million surplus.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — The interest, Mr. Speaker, part of why we had in the past year a \$592 million deficit is the interest payments. The interest on the debt that was ran up by the former government, the government that was in power from 1982 to 1991, the government that ran up \$11.5 billion in brand-new debt.

Brand-new debt — \$11.5 billion — and that’s the thing that we inherited. It was the hand we were dealt. We had no control over that, nor did the citizens of Saskatchewan have any direct control of it, because the members in the former government said in 1986 in the election campaign, look, we’re for balancing the budget. We know that deficit spending is no good. We’re for balancing the budget. And that’s why they introduced . . . that year Gary Lane introduced a deficit budget that he said was going to be \$300 million. And you know, by the time the smoke had cleared after the election, it wasn’t \$300 million. Whoops! It was \$1.2 billion — 1.2 billion. It is unbelievable.

And members now sitting in opposition wonder why it is that the public doesn't trust them. They were fooled, the public were fooled in 1986. And I think the public follows an old Confucius saying. And the saying goes: fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. And you know, the public was not fooled. It is no secret why your numbers are so small over there and why you couldn't get elected dog catcher if we ever had elections for dog catchers.

The history of the former government is atrocious. It has heaped abuse on all of the people of Saskatchewan, abuse that we all have to share, Mr. Speaker, abuse that this government is trying to deal with. This government that was dealt a cruel hand full of threes and fours, and not even enough of them to make a straight. A terrible hand left to us by the former government, Mr. Speaker. And we, once again, the New Democratic government, is going to set it straight. And set it straight we will.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — In the 1991 election campaign they said the deficit's going to be \$260 million. To make a long story a bit shorter, that became not 260 but \$960 million, a mere \$700 million difference; \$700 million, Mr. Speaker. Had they been accurate our last year we would have been in a surplus situation, had they been telling the truth in the 1991 campaign when the Premier and the Deputy Premier wrote their minister of Finance and the former premier and said, is it true, is it really going to be 260?

And because of that, Mr. Speaker, because of the response that came back saying yes, it's going to be 260 million this year, we made a decision that said, why would we go into a boxing ring or an election campaign with one arm tied behind our back. If they say it's 260, it's got to be 260. We're going to campaign on the same basis as they did. But because of that untruth, we have to deal with a much bigger mess than anyone was campaigning on in 1991. And as I said, Mr. Speaker, deal with the mess we will.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, seeing it near 10 o'clock I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.