

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. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before we adjourned the House for the supper break, there are a number of questions that certainly must be raised and be discussed over the period of the next few days — and not just the period of the next few days in this budget debate but I believe, Mr. Speaker, as we get into the very serious debate on expenditures of government through the process and get into the different departments, there will be a lot of questions that will be raised. And as we're finding even in our caucus today through the process of questions to the Premier, we are finding that there are indeed people across this province, not only in the city of Regina and the city of Saskatoon, but right across the province of Saskatchewan, that have some real serious concerns, have some legitimate questions that they would like to direct towards the government, towards the Premier, via my colleagues and I. And we will continue to do that.

Prior to supper, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the fact that I felt that the government deserved an A plus for the way they put their budget together; however, gave it a very poor grade in the area of 1 to 10 on the basis of the fact that it was a budget that really wasn't as truthful as it appeared to be on the surface.

And I go back to an article in 1992 that I think even pertains to the address that we heard today and what most people think and the feelings of people across this province. And the headline reads, "Provincial finances confused and possibly misleading." And the editorialist says, it starts out:

It's hard to know what or who to believe about the state of the province's finances these days.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

On April 22, 1991, Hepworth donned his rose-tinted glasses and announced that the projected deficit for 1991-92 would be 265 million.

Further down he brings out the fact that, and says:

Freshly minted Finance minister Ed Tchorzewski donned his darkest, most funereal suit and announced the "revised 1991-92 deficit would reach 960.3 million."

But down at the bottom of the third page of

Tchorzewski's report was some fine print that read "prior to 72 million in corrective measures." In other words, the government had actually already lopped 72 million off government spending — to offset the 72-million loss from the repeal of the expanded, harmonized sales tax.

So the deficit was really 888.3 million, not 960.3 million. The still-sore-at-the-Tories NDP just wanted to rub some salt into the wounds of the defeated Devine government.

Then we move on to December 16 where again it says that:

Tchorzewski explained that the 587-million difference between the latest projection and Hepworth's was due to: 1) the absence of a \$250-million dividend from Crown Investments Corp.

Which I spoke a little bit about prior to supper.

2) a reduction in federal transfer payments by 38 million and a reduction in revenues by 131 million.

The revenue shortfall was compounded by a \$96-million increase in expenditures, mainly from the increased costs of farm safety net programs and debt service charges.

Then, (he goes on to say) this week, wearing a somber business suit, Romanow told an NDP fund-raising dinner that the 1992-93 deficit will likely be well above the target of 500 million.

Why?

CIC is expected to lose more than 600 million in 1991.

And I gave some of those figures based on our investigations of the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) report in Crown Corporations.

... \$270 million more than estimated by Tchorzewski just a month or two ago, the premier said. Should all or part of this loss be taken in the 1991-92 fiscal year, the projected deficit of \$852 million could be substantially higher.

And on and on it goes. And at the end, the editorialist finally said:

Is there some double counting going on here? Could it be the government intends to jack up the deficit to astronomical heights in the 1992 fiscal year to make the 1993 deficit look better?

In any case, the result is a very confused and possibly misleading, picture of the province's finances.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what the government has done. And what we saw in 1991, the government just taking bogus deficit figures, transferring them from one . . . and it was interesting, Mr. Speaker. We had the auditor come and try and walk us through how we should try and follow the budgetary process in the province of Saskatchewan.

And because most of my colleagues have a farming background, he referred to the fact that if you have two bins on your farm — bin A, which we'll call the Consolidated Fund; bin B, which is your Crown corporations and other entities — at the end of the day the fact is there's still only so much money. The deficit is still a certain amount. You've either got bin A is full and bin B is a quarter full. There's a bin and a quarter of grain on your farm, an inventory.

And what the government has basically done was took an inflated move from bin B into bin A to bring a bad light to the last few years of the Conservative government. And then now they're transferring from bin A back to bin B to make the NDP (New Democratic Party) government of the day look good, and leading the people of Saskatchewan to believe they are indeed balancing the budget when the reality is, the inventory on the farm is still the same. It really hasn't changed.

And we can also look at another column. This one is February 18, 1994 where one of the columnists kind of puts on his thinking cap and decides . . . tries to suggest what might have been had the '86 election gone a little different.

But the interesting point that he brings out after all his discussions and talking about general revenues and what have you, the member suggests that there were budgetary surpluses in the last five budgets, three brought in by the present government, two brought in by the former Conservative government.

The positive revenue-to-expenditures picture of the last five budgets has only come about through tough decisions by *both* Tory and NDP administrations to cut spending and increase taxes.

Governments may have been four or five years too late in getting serious about the deficit problem.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me there are some media personnel who are willing to look a little bit beyond what they just see on the surface and look at the realities. We hope that they will even get in when the auditor presents his statement and do a little more in-depth research to find out exactly where the deficit is, what the actual cost is to taxpayers, and the fact that the tax burden we face today is going to continue to increase even if this government shows — and which I believe they will in the next two years — a balance and if not a surplus on the general side or the Consolidated Fund.

Looking at the budget presentation and some of the street polls, one individual contacted said:

I think the fact that we have one of the highest per capita tax rates says there's something wrong. I also don't think the fact they are playing politician with this is good. When they first start they say the deficit is bigger than it is, then at the end of their term they make things look good. That is not right.

Mr. Speaker, I think from that comment and from a number of the comments that I received at the doors when I was helping the Conservative candidate in Regina North West, people are definitely concerned about politicians and how they relate to people and how they lay out promises, suggest that they won't do this, and then at the end of the day they go against it and totally reverse what they've said. Like if we were to bring a tape recorder in and just go through some of the comments that were made from the '87 to '91 period, of all the berating that the government of the day took regarding the increases that weren't . . . There wasn't enough in Education, there wasn't enough in Health, and there wasn't enough for Municipal Government, and there wasn't enough for Social Services and for the poor people of this province.

And then at the end of the day, where are we today? And I think, I trust, Mr. Speaker, that people themselves are beginning to realize that they must act responsibly as well — that people in general, the taxpayer, cannot expect to receive something for nothing. If you're going to put more money into a program, it has to come from somebody. It comes from each and every one of us as individual taxpayers.

And as this one individual suggested in the street poll, it's time we put aside the politics and got on with the real issue of governing this province; of balancing our budgets; of putting things straightforward before the people instead of manipulating the programs, inflating the deficits when a government's first elected so that they can spend less through the next few years and all of a sudden balance the books and have a surplus at the end of the year.

And I trust that the NDP don't find a major . . . as they would say, oh we came across a windfall, in the fall of 1995, so they can go to the people and through a budget in the spring of 1996, and tell the people, this is what we can do for you because all of a sudden we've balanced the books. We're going to have a \$20 million surplus, but we're also going to have \$120 million to pay . . . to put into further expenditures on your behalf, and then call an election shortly after the budget is presented for June of 1996. Who knows? We may see that, maybe we won't. Maybe the Premier's going to do it in the fall of 1995.

But I think people in general want to see politicians of all stripes getting out there and saying: we don't have all the answers, but by working together and working with you we've got some ideas, and let's put them together and see what we can come up with. And people are looking — looking for ideas. They're

looking for politicians that have not . . . they're not necessarily looking for us to have all the answers to the problems they face. They're looking for us to give them some suggestions. They're looking as well for us, as the politicians, to sit down and listen to them, and take some of their ideas.

And, Mr. Speaker, I read an article in *Grainews* the other day where an individual economist was suggesting a flat tax and a guaranteed income. I met with a few people over the weekend and of course one of the major concerns on the street, and that's been coming in through questions, is the fact that there's been so many more people added to the welfare rolls — the welfare list — in this province, some 20,000 more since October of 1991, 20,000 people more drawing off the taxpayer.

And, Mr. Speaker, what I found interesting — people were saying: well maybe instead of having a welfare roll or department of . . . welfare department, maybe if we had a guaranteed income that people could tie into if they have no income whatsoever, they can ask for and receive this basically on the same principles as welfare assistance. Or if they have a job that gives them . . . let's say a family of four is entitled to \$1,100 under the welfare system, but either the husband or the wife can find a job and generate \$800 or \$900 through a job for the same family of four; and rather than letting them struggle with the \$900, giving them that income supplement and allowing them to raise their income up to that \$1,100 range.

I think, Mr. Speaker, you would find that there would be a lot of people say that sounds like a good idea. Number one, it gives people a fair income to live on. Number two, it probably would be a program that would be a lot easier to administer and wouldn't be as easy to manipulate as we see the welfare system as it sits today, and the fact that many people believe there are too many people abusing the welfare system.

Another major concern is jobs, and the minister talked about job creation, talked about 5,000 more jobs in this current fiscal year. And one has to wonder where those jobs are really going to come from in view of the fact that we have seen such a reduction of jobs over the past few years.

And I go to a young university student talking about the budget:

Speaking as someone who is just out of university that's not the way to go about it. It takes away the opportunity for young people to get a start. A lot of us are impeded as it is.

Mr. Speaker, people are looking for job opportunities, and what we have in this province through the form of taxation that has been brought upon us, Mr. Speaker, we have taken away the incentive for individuals to set up and establish businesses and create job opportunities for young people.

But I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, and I would say to the young people of this province, that I'm not

necessarily sure we should be looking to someone else to always create the jobs for us. I think there are a lot of entrepreneurs out here in Saskatchewan who have a lot of ideas and a lot of vision.

I've challenged young people at some of the graduations I have attended to begin looking at the fact of not necessarily going to university and asking father government to provide for their education and then to provide a job at the end of the day, but even if they go and get a university education to look at the possibility of applying the expertise they have and creating the employment, maybe starting their own processing or manufacturing. And we have all kinds of opportunities in this province, especially when we look at agriculture and adding value added to our production rather than sending the raw product out.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are a lot of opportunities out there and we need to encourage people to look at ways — even young people — to put some of the ideas to work. And as governments and as parents, we need to work along with our young people and give them that assistance and encourage them along to look at designing some programs rather than always looking to government. And I trust that at the end of the day the job creation that the Minister of Finance has talked about in our budget, that the government indeed will look at ways in which they can encourage and help people through the hoops of trying to design and operate a business versus just opening up another job in another department to say that they created jobs, for we know that there are going to be further job reductions.

(1915)

And I believe it was in Saturday's paper where there's a hundred more fewer jobs in the public sector. And with reductions coming, further reductions in education and health care, there are going to be more people looking for work.

Mr. Speaker, all parties and all politicians want to cut deficit financing. I believe that there . . . I don't know of any politician who wants to continue to spend more than they are generating in revenue, and on that part I give the Minister of Finance credit for endeavouring to reduce the deficit so that the costs of government will . . . the government will be living within its means. But I would plead with the minister to be a little more straightforward and honest with the people of Saskatchewan.

The minister also talks about the cost of living and boasted about where Saskatchewan is regarding the cost of living across Canada. An article on Saturday's *Leader-Post*, February 19, '94, the title is "Little new to cost-of-living boast":

For Finance Minister Janice MacKinnon to boast her budget has left Saskatchewan taxpayers with the second-cheapest provincial taxes and utility rates would be a little like her bragging that Saskatchewan farmers produced the most wheat this year.

Both beg the immediate response: "So what. We always have.

Further on,

This, MacKinnon noted with great pride during question period on Wednesday and repeated on budget day and again the day after, makes us the second-cheapest place to live . . .

The only thing is, that's about where we've always been.

In 1985, the same Saskatchewan family was also second-lowest (\$3,152 annual charge) behind Alberta. In 1988, the same family(although a 20,000-a-year annual income comparison was used) was again rated second (\$2,620 annual charge) behind Manitoba.

And then we go on.

In fact, if you discounted car insurance and even the gas tax (ours is the second highest in the nation), a \$25,000-a-year family would pay more in taxes and real utility rates in Saskatchewan than any other non-Atlantic province.

And I conclude, quoting from this article, by saying it says:

Saskatchewan's otherwise highest-in-the nation income tax rate (\$3,993 at \$50,000-income level and \$7,633 at \$75,000-income level) means we don't do as well in the middle and upper income levels.

In both we are fifth.

Lower "utility rates" and all.

What the article is basically bringing forth, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we can boast about a cost of living index, but the fact is the numbers really haven't changed. We're still the second lowest in Canada; that hasn't changed from a period of over the last six years.

And as I indicated before, Mr. Speaker, the indirect taxation is hurting many municipalities. I just want to read a couple comments made by aldermen in the city of Regina and the . . . Mr. Henry Dayday, the mayor of Saskatoon. "Cities counting cash." "Grant reductions taking a heavy toll." Regina, February 18.

Finance Minister Janice MacKinnon got plenty of Lipp from the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) after she introduced the provincial budget Wednesday.

The association, which represents cities and towns across the province, claims the provincial government is trying to solve its

deficit problems on the backs of local governments and on people who pay property taxes.

And Regina city councillor John Lipp, who was pressed into duty Wednesday as spokesman for SUMA, made it clear the association is not pleased.

"Again this year property taxpayers are being asked to pay for a large part of the provincial government's deficit reduction . . .

"Urban governments are carrying more than their fair share of the provincial deficit."

While the eight per cent reductions in urban revenue-sharing grants in this year's budget are no surprise, because it was announced in 1993 in order to give cities a chance to be prepared, Lipp said the reductions will still hurt.

The fact that they were announced yesterday doesn't mean they will not hurt today, and the fact that all it did was gave the Minister of Finance the ability to say, no new taxes in this budget, because she'd already announced them.

It would be interesting to note how different politicians will stand up and defend each other. I look at the mayor of Regina here:

Archer said the announcement by MacKinnon that no further grant decreases for local government are planned after this year "is very definitely welcome news."

In the meantime, while he is sitting down at city council and they're trying to determine how they are going to meet their deficit or their budget predictions with the knowledge that there's a further 8 per cent cut in transfer of payments from the province, Mr. Archer stands up there and says well it's welcome that we didn't have the . . . at least there weren't any further taxes announced to us. I find that very interesting.

Let's take a look at Saskatoon. The province . . . an article in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, February 18:

The province didn't raise its taxes, but it may force Saskatoon to raise property taxes by cutting the amount of money it passes on to the city, officials say.

The revenue-sharing pool, the major transfer of provincial funds to municipalities, was cut by eight per cent and that is reflected in city council looking for 1.8 per cent more from property owners in its proposed operating budget, said finance director Phil Richards.

And then I noticed with interest that what annoyed Saskatoon even more than anything was:

(While) Regina's Wascana Centre Authority will receive \$782,000 . . . Meewasin receives

\$740,000 . . . The Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts in the Queen City receives \$500,000 while the Centennial Auditorium receives nothing.

The MacKenzie Art Gallery receives a direct grant of \$400,000 while the Mendel must rely on Saskatoon taxpayers for that portion of its funding.

I can see why the mayor of Saskatoon is not very happy, and I'm surprised that all the Saskatoon MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) aren't standing up and berating the Regina MLAs and saying, isn't there a little bit of fairness here, or shouldn't there be a little bit of fairness.

And I can understand. I think what I see from most local governments, most hospital boards, most educators and school boards across the province, and your reeves and mayors, people are willing to take the cuts as long as they are treated fairly, as long as everyone is taking the same cuts and they're being treated in the same way.

In the area of health care we have seen significant cuts, and the rural communities are the areas that are really being hurt the most. And, Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of dropping in and visiting patients in a number of the hospitals here in Regina and certainly in my own constituency.

I find it interesting as I visit with patients, Mr. Speaker. What I have found is you may find on one floor you go into a room, and you talk to a patient, an individual you know, and the comments will be: boy, the service and the care around here is unbelievable; it's just terrific, it's just . . . I can't speak well enough of the nurses and the staff on this floor. Then you go up two floors and you run into another patient and they haven't anything good to say. And I begin to wonder what's going on.

I just talked to a couple last night. A gentleman just had an operation at the Plains Health Centre, was sent out two days after his operation, and is still struggling to recover from this operation. And it's fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that his wife happened to be a nurse because she was sitting there caring for him. And I'm not exactly sure what happened, whether it just happened to be a floor where there was some very poor personnel on the floor, Mr. Speaker, or what the situation, but they certainly weren't happy with the type of care they were given. And then to be asked to leave after two days when the recovery process still needed more time.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that person, that patient, could have been treated a lot more fairly if at least they would have been allowed, rather than sending them home, to go to the local hospital in Kipling and spend three or four days there to recover. Mr. Speaker, that would have been a saving, but at the same time would have put them in a hospital or an institution where they could have received the medical attention they needed.

Mr. Speaker, I also found knocking on doors — here again in Regina North West — I happened to knock on one door and a lady came to the door and she had indicated that she had just come back from one of the hospitals here in Regina. And she wasn't very happy, Mr. Speaker.

She had gone to visit her mother-in-law the day before and when she arrived at the hospital she found out that her mother-in-law was put in a situation where she had asked to use a bedpan, was left there for a whole hour before. In fact she wouldn't have been taken care of if her daughter-in-law hadn't gone to the hospital. So she was spending more of her time at the hospital to care for her mother-in-law.

One has to ask what is going on, especially when the money that is being called for in this budget for health care really hasn't decreased. We've cut services, but for the amount of services we are still spending a lot of money on health care and we're getting little for it.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked about health care. I've talked about the concern people have. I've talked about the concern school boards have. One Dorothy Fortier, president of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, said:

The fact that school boards were forewarned about provincial funding cutbacks does not make the consequences any less severe for education in Saskatchewan.

People are concerned, Mr. Speaker, people are willing to do with a little less. They're willing to do their part and pull their weight. But they are concerned with the way the systematic, slash-and-cut approach of the government and the way the government are leading people to believe they're doing so much for them when in fact they are doing so much less.

Mr. Speaker, yes, trustees are scrambling. I've noticed an article, *Leader-Post*, Regina, Friday, February 18 where it talks about the effects of the budget on education and . . . just a couple of paragraphs:

There won't be education funding cuts next year and this year's decreases are not as bad as first predicted, claims the provincial budget.

But school boards say there is some creative accounting at work and they'll still have to scramble to balance their local budgets.

Mr. Speaker, yes people are concerned. And for the Minister of Finance to stand in this Assembly and say, no, we haven't increased taxes, I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance wasn't really being honest with me as an elected representative, or the people of Saskatchewan in that comment. It was a matter of how the department and the Department of Finance and the government of the day chose to manipulate the funds. Mr. Speaker, I trust that in the future we will be able to move away from that.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the government is certainly going to need a little skill and some luck in indeed reaching their projected targets without really increasing or putting a greater load on the people of Saskatchewan.

And the fact that the government is, as one headline reads, "Government banking on gambling windfall, the fact that the government is going into gambling as a means of generating revenue, I find appalling. In fact most people I talk to — and a lot of people have called and a lot of people have raised the issue — really feel that what we have done in this province and what we're doing in Canada is really moving away from some of the moral guidelines in this province that our forefathers based and established this province under. And I believe it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we can allow ourselves because of money . . . It says . . . The headline says or the first paragraph says:

It would appear that money is helping soothe the Romanow government's guilty conscience about its decision to expand the gambling industry.

Well it would seem to me if money is what it's taking to soothe their conscience, maybe they should be listening to their conscience a little more because I'm sure many of their constituents have the same feeling that I do, that many people across this province have, regarding expanding the role of gambling. And maybe this is an area, Mr. Speaker, where we should have a plebiscite giving people the real opportunity to express their opinions on how the government should be deriving revenue.

But, Mr. Speaker, if indeed the gambling doesn't take off the way the government is projecting it to take off, it's going to have a major impact on the budget of tomorrow. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things that the government is really hoping don't happen.

They're hoping that we will indeed see an increase, if I'm not mistaken, in the oil prices from their projections for 1995-96, I believe. At today's prices we're at about \$14 American. They're projecting crude at about \$20 American. If we hit that price, certainly it's a boom for the province of Saskatchewan in the fact that there will be that extra revenue.

The province is hoping that the Minister of Finance in Ottawa and the federal government does not offload any more onto it. If the federal government in Ottawa offloads any more, it's going to create a problem. If they don't, then it's certainly to the province's benefit.

But I trust, Mr. Speaker, we will not be relying totally on gambling proceeds to indeed balance the budget on the backs of poor people across this province.

And I say poor people, Mr. Speaker, because . . . And I've talked to hoteliers who were lobbying me for video lottery terminals in their facilities two or three years ago, and with the change in government and the

change in the way the government approached it were given those video lottery terminals. And now today in some cases down in my area of the world some of the hoteliers have actually thrown out the VLTs (video lottery terminals) because what did they find, Mr. Speaker, a person would come in, sit all night at that little one-armed bandit, putting in their loonies. And you know what? They didn't even spend a cent on a cup of coffee.

(1930)

And for all the cost it took to manage that VLT, the hotelier owners finally realized there was no benefit for them. In fact they were losing revenue because people were spending . . . just putting every cent they had in their pocket just to try and get that one win. And how many people do you watch sit there, pulling on that one-armed bandit to get that one big windfall, and it takes them an awful long time to get that windfall.

And then I find, Mr. Speaker — just from talking to people — that if they do hit the windfall, hit the jackpot, most people don't know how to quit. They tend to put it all back into the machine, and spend it, and they've lost it all anyway. I guess they'd be further ahead if they looked and spent some time at home, and looked at ways in which they could find some recreation . . . enjoy recreation with their families, and wholesome family time. They would be further ahead and we as a society would be further ahead as well.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that Saskatchewan families are going to be affected by this budget. Each and every one of us are going to be affected. We're going to have to dig deeper and deeper into our pockets, as the programs disappear, and as we try to put funding into the programs that are left.

So it would seem when the NDP calls this budget a delivering-the-promise budget, it's simply not so, and I'm sure many of the members opposite know it as well, if they took the time to. I would suggest they even take the time to sit down with the auditor, and go through the process of how you determine a budget, how you figure out spending in Saskatchewan, where all the money is spent. They would be interested. They would be surprised to find out what really goes on.

Mr. Speaker, it's certainly been a pleasure to stand and to speak regarding the budget speech that was brought forward . . . or the budget proposal that was brought forth by the Minister of Finance. And I would suggest to you that my colleagues and I will continue to monitor the process; and we will continue to stand up; and we will continue to remind the people of Saskatchewan that the so-called budget full of goodies, and promises, and no new taxes is anything but. There were further taxes. There will be further taxes. The deficit isn't under control. The overall deficit of this province continues to grow. And until we finally decide amongst ourselves that we're not going to quit playing politics, we will never see the deficit really under control.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that it's time we put

politics aside, laid it out so that people can see exactly where the spending is rather than juggling from bin A to bin B, and I think the MLA for Kinistino knows what it means to transfer grain from one bin to the next. When we quit the transfers and just get on with the realities of the laying out for the people the total spending of the province of Saskatchewan, the total debt, the people of Saskatchewan will say thank you and we can get on with the job of building this province because it is a beautiful province to live in.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just picking up on the member opposite's last comments about transferring grain from bin A to bin B, I think that those words ring very hollow in view of the fact that for some 10 years they drummed up a \$15 billion debt in this province that have required our government to take some very tough measures in order to get a handle on the mess that was left by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to engage in the budget debate and I want to start by thanking everyone in Saskatchewan, the thousands of people, who are working very hard to put into effect the health reform and the changes in health care in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Over the last two and a half years, Mr. Speaker, people have worked very, very hard to develop the health reform and to work in their communities to implement health reform. We had, as I have said on numerous occasions in this legislature, stakeholder meetings right from the outset, right after we were elected.

We started stakeholders' meetings, meetings in communities, town hall meetings across this province where we talked about the direction that we felt health care should be going, and we invited the public to participate in discussions, provide us with their ideas, and help us to implement health reform.

We have had an unprecedented participation by the public in this process and it will result, I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, in a very high quality health care system and a better health care system than had we not had this kind of participation from communities and the public.

We have had a lot of rhetoric from the members opposite in this budget debate because the members opposite, both the Liberals and the Tories, are unable to focus on the larger picture. Instead they get involved in petty politics instead of making a positive contribution to the debate or a positive contribution to the changes that are taking place in the province.

The fact is, Saskatchewan has a balanced approach. And our government is a government with a vision, and it is a government in control. We are headed in

the right direction, and we are doing what has to be done for the future of our children and grandchildren.

I think it's important for us to think about our history as well as we examine what is taking place in Saskatchewan with respect to health care and with respect to balancing the budget and moving to a zero annual deficit. We have often heard the Premier say — and it is true — that Tommy Douglas always talked about the need to live within our means. Social democratic policy, CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) policy, the policy of Tommy Douglas, has always been to live within our means.

When the CCF took over government in 1944, the province was \$178 million in debt and had not been able to borrow money since 1932. The CCF set aside 10 per cent to pay off the debt, reducing it to 18 million by 1960. And the CCF were able to do this while they proceeded to implement programs such as hospital insurance in 1948, free medicare for seniors and the handicapped in the 1950s, and full medicare in 1962. It was the fiscal prudence of the CCF from 1944 to 1962 that allowed them to accomplish these feats of modern social policy, and it will be the fiscal prudence of the NDP government in 1991 and successive years, Mr. Speaker, that will allow us to balance our books and move ahead to strengthen social programs for Saskatchewan people.

In 1944, the Sigerist report was done, which was the Saskatchewan Health Services Survey Commission. It was a report on health services, and it was very interesting. There were some very interesting points made in this report. They noted that the main defect of medical care in the province at that time was the improper distribution of medical personnel. In other words, in 1944, the fact that there was an inadequate supply of doctors in rural areas was identified by the Sigerist report. That goes back to 1944, Mr. Speaker.

They also indicated that it was urgent to establish a system of socialized medical service that would guarantee the people the basic service they need and which they are entitled to at all times. It was recommended that a planning commission be created to prepare the way for the establishment of rural health districts, Mr. Speaker.

So we see that way back, long before 1991, we have health care people talking about the need for rural health districts. In fact I think about that time they were actually talking about approximately 30 regions or districts and then larger districts encompassing the smaller districts. So this goes back a very very long ways, Mr. Speaker.

In 1982, Tommy Douglas recognized that and indicated that "When we began to plan medicare, we pointed out that it would be in two phases." And these are Tommy's words:

The first phase would be to remove the financial barrier between those giving the service and those receiving it. The second

phase would be to reorganize and revamp the whole delivery system. And of course, that's the big item. That's the thing we haven't done yet.

Tommy recognized the need to revamp and reorganize the health care system to create health districts, to coordinate and integrate services and to make the health system more responsive to local communities on a broader scale.

And it's very interesting when we look at what happened in 1962, when Tommy moved to bring in medicare for all people in Saskatchewan. There was a so-called medicare crisis created, and who created this, Mr. Speaker? Well it was the same people who sit there across from us today; it was Liberals and Tories.

KOD (Keep Our Doctors) committees were established throughout the province. It started when four women in Regina were threatened that they would not treat them, that their doctors would not treat them if they became members of the government's medicare plan. Scare tactics were used at that time in the same way that they're being used today.

I want to make a point, however, at this stage, at this point in my discussion, Mr. Speaker, and that is that in Saskatchewan today the Saskatchewan Medical Association has not been engaged in this kind of fearmongering that has taken place by the Liberals and Tories. There may be some individual doctors, for example, who are criticizing health reform for one reason or another. But for the most part the medical profession in the province has been sitting at the stakeholder tables and has been helping us develop health reform and has been a very positive part of the process.

However, back in 1962 the KOD committees warned mothers of a denial of medical attention for their children. This was reported in *The Toronto Star* in 1962. *The Ottawa Journal* similarly said that Saskatchewan voters have been aroused to a frenzy due to the fear of losing their doctors.

Do these sort of tactics sound familiar, I ask the members in the legislature? Of course they do. We've been hearing them for the last year and a half by the Tories and Liberals on the opposite side of this House. We've heard horror stories like no doctors, no services, destruction of rural Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that history will once again prove them wrong.

The KOD committees back in 1962 provided a means for Liberal, Conservative, and Socred parties to join around a single issue. It was the same scare tactics and misinformation being used today by the Liberals and Tories. The same threats, the same manipulation.

On February 9, 1994, the member from Kindersley stated in this House:

... rural Saskatchewan has fewer doctors with heavier patient loads, fewer hospitals, with

more cuts on the way . . .

On February 17, 1994, the member from Saskatoon Greystone stated:

How can you assure us that this acute care crisis will not worsen?

We're talking about people with real problems and real concerns and real fears . . .

I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, the same scare tactics, the same misinformation being used today by Liberals and Tories as we witnessed in 1962. And the KOD committee's press releases were a constant source of individual cases and they were given generous space in the generally anti-government media.

On February 17, 1994, the member from Saskatoon Greystone said that:

... experiences like this are being brought to our attention with frightening regularity. . ."

Well, Mr. Speaker, in most of these instances the facts of the members opposite are wrong, they're distorted, they're exaggerated, and they're used for political purposes as they try to manipulate the people to grandstand and score political points but not to help. Not to help, and not to cooperate. Cheap scare tactics.

(1945)

And this is in opposition and this is in such contrast to the thousands of people across this province who are working very, very hard to implement health reform and to make things better for their community. In sharp contrast is the leadership in some of their communities, the Liberals and Tories, who are doing what they will to destroy any improvement in the health care system, to denounce health reform, and all for cheap political gain.

The KOD committees held rallies around various parts of the province — does that sound familiar? — and they planned a mammoth rally in Regina for July 11, 1962. Plans for the rally went forward with ads in the press. Instead of 40,000 to 50,000 people expected, 4,500 showed.

And the Liberals and Tories organized a rally last spring in 1973. The member from Greystone was at that rally inciting the people who were there, for her selfish political reasons. And the member from Estevan was there moving around in the crowd saying, don't let them get away with it, fight them, or words to that effect, as we saw quoted in the newspaper.

And at that time as well there was predictions that there'd be some 12,000 people at this rally. I think it was about 7 or 800 people who showed, Mr. Speaker.

Now why, why is this scare tactic occurring when we have so many hundreds and thousands of people in this province who have been working for a year and a half to reform our health care system so that we can

save it for future generations.

The people of this province have a vision and they have foresight. Unlike the Liberals and Tories opposite, Mr. Speaker, who choose to engage in KOD tactics, scare tactics, and tactics that go as far back as 1962.

And to show the duplicitousness of the Liberal opposition — in 1991 the Liberal election platform indicated that the Liberals would develop a network of health care and social services that is community and regionally based. They would promote and expand the cost-effective option of home care. There would be a moratorium on capital construction. They would focus on effective delivery of services rather than construction of new facilities and, as I indicated in the House the other day from a newspaper article which I don't have in front of me today, they also talked about a freeze on health care spending.

Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the effective service delivery rather than emphasis on construction of new facilities and many of the items that the Liberals indicated in their platform, are things that our government is working to put into effect today. But instead, the Liberal opposition will have the people of Saskatchewan believe that they don't agree with health reform and they don't agree with the approach of this government, when they know full well that it is the only choice and the only alternative if we're to save medicare for future generations.

Marcel Massé, the federal minister, said on health costs that we could reduce considerably, perhaps by 20 per cent, the costs of our health services while keeping the quality high, and yet we see the leader of the Liberal opposition suggesting that there should not be any decreases in health care funding. And yet her federal counterparts are suggesting a 20 per cent decrease.

And what are we witnessing in Alberta today, Mr. Speaker, where there is a Tory government? We are witnessing absolutely massive cuts with no health care plan to minimize the impact of those cuts and to improve the health care situation for future generations — massive cuts, 17.6 per cent for health. Hospitals in Calgary and Edmonton face cuts of close to 30 per cent. Five thousand health care workers will lose their jobs over the next three years and there is no transition program for displaced workers.

We in Saskatchewan have a transition program for workers that may be displaced in health care reductions. We have a plan to minimize the impact on workers and on the general public, and we have a plan to move to services in the community which are less expensive and, in some cases, much more effective than institutional services.

There is no plan in Alberta to reform health care delivery. Cuts are being imposed on the existing system with no plan for the future, and that is the way Tory governments approach health care, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite would have us believe that

they are the saviours of medicare, and like the KOD in 1962 they bring up anecdotal case after anecdotal case to try and prove their point. All they have to do is look to the border on the west to see how Tory governments implement health care.

The Saskatchewan NDP government has moved to reform the health system in as sensitive a manner as any government in this country and as sensitively as possible. It needs to be done but it needs to be done in an organized and planned fashion with a sensitivity to the effects of health care reform.

In the face of these huge cuts, Premier Klein from the Tory government in Alberta allowed one of his own cabinet ministers to build an unnecessary and expensive hospital in his home riding. And that is Tory health reform.

In Liberal New Brunswick, what do we see? In Liberal New Brunswick they came forward without any consultation and wiped out existing 51 hospital boards, both private and public. In Saskatchewan, private institutions have been set aside and given a special status, particularly our denominational institutions. You will see in other jurisdictions in this country, people saying the Saskatchewan experience has been a positive experience in this regard.

In New Brunswick, these boards were wiped out overnight and they imposed eight consolidated hospital boards without prior warning or consultation. That was in a Liberal province, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal opposition leader here would have us believe that our consultation, which has been lengthy, and we are talking of thousands of people, wasn't adequate, and yet her friends in New Brunswick simply walk in and bang, it's done, and that's it.

I just think there is absolutely no comparison between what's occurred in Saskatchewan and what's occurred in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

And let's look at federal Liberals' commitment to health care. Their commitment to health care is evident in the way that they've handled the tobacco tax. They did not have to cut taxes to stop smuggling. In fact the National Campaign for Action on Tobacco submitted a detailed 12-point plan to stop smuggling without a negative impact on either health or revenues.

But the federal Liberals have shown us who their friends are. That's the Liberal leader's cousins in Ottawa. They've showed us what their priorities are. They've showed us who their friends are by agreeing to the request of Quebec Premier Daniel Johnson to cut taxes. With a provincial election coming in Quebec this year and Johnson's Liberals underdogs to the P.Q. (Parti Québécois), Mr. Chrétien put the interest of Quebec Liberals above the interests of Canadian children.

Each year smoking causes over 38,000 deaths in Canada and 590,000 deaths in the U.S.A. (United States of America). If we adjust for population, the

incidence of smoking-related deaths are 40 per cent higher in the U.S. Higher prices for cigarettes in Canada is cited as the main reason for this difference, according to health experts.

But that didn't matter to the Liberals in Ottawa. Purely political considerations are what was important to the Liberals in Ottawa, in the same way the Leader of the Liberal Party is more interested in cheap politics than trying to work with the government and with communities to implement health reform and save medicare for future generations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization states that health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The three fundamental principles of the new health care system are: increasing community involvement and control over the health system; emphasizing disease and accident prevention, healthy lifestyles, and community-based programs; and increasing coordination and integration of health services to provide a more responsive and efficient health system.

For the first time ever, accountability for health care expenditures goes far beyond simply counting pencils. In The Health Districts Act, one of the requirements is to provide annual reports. The district boards must provide annual reports on the services and activities that they provide and engage in, and on their costs. They must set out audited financial statements. Now I want to point this out. Hospital boards were never required to make public their financial statements. District boards will be required to do that, and this is a major change in policy and a positive change that will require more accountability to the public. The district board will have to set out a detailed audited schedule of investments.

And get this, Mr. Speaker, a report on the health status of the residents of the health district and the effectiveness of the district health board's programs — now that is one that I particularly like. Because what that does is it will inform the public what the health status is of that district. We will be able to keep this data on file in the Department of Health and make comparisons throughout the province.

And the people within the district will also be able to make these comparisons and urge their district board to improve services if they don't show an increased health status, or if somehow the district may be slightly behind the district next door, and there is no specific reason for those differences.

So I think that the accountability that's built into the new health care system is a first in this province, it's positive, and it is going to allow communities throughout this province to play a real role in developing their health care programing.

Boards are required in this conjunction as well to have two public meetings each year and to present this information — two public meetings. Hospital boards were never required to do this, Mr. Speaker.

Now let's just examine some of the things that have happened so far with respect to health reform. I just want to highlight some of the things.

Some of the accomplishments have been . . . And I'm very proud to say I'm proud of our government that has increased successively the home care budget since it has taken government. Over the last three budgets the increase in home care is 42.5 per cent, Mr. Speaker — 42.5 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — And home care districts and home care people are busy, and district boards now working with home care people are busy developing community-based services in our communities that will enhance the quality of life for Saskatchewan people.

Health centres are providing much-needed services that were not being provided in some cases in the past. Craik and District Health Centre has more long-term care, palliative, and respite because of their ageing population. Plans include, in Craik and district, offering more community based health programs working to better meet the needs of the elderly and their families and insuring continued access to reliable emergency services.

And I'm sure that district board is doing whatever it can to expand its programing within the context of the budget and to determine what the needs of their citizens are and to implement programs that will meet those needs.

If we look at some other health centres in the province; for example, the Montmartre health centre, the administrator there has said that if anything, the range of services now offered by the health centre is even broader than before they were converted.

This is what's happening in communities and in areas where they are working with the district boards and with the government to develop services.

(2000)

Now I'm not suggesting that every community is doing that, but many, many, many communities are. Some communities are suffering the manipulation of the members opposite, and I suggest to them that they are not doing their communities a service, they are doing their communities a disservice. Because throughout this province we see many communities working with their district boards and with the Department of Health to come forward with expanded services. In communities where this may not be happening, we often see a Tory MLA that is doing what he can to make sure that people are upset as opposed to working in a cooperative fashion.

St. Walburg Community Health Centre for example, if I can just indicate some of what's happening in St. Walburg. In addition to providing emergency services, stabilization and assessment, daily lab and X-ray service allows for diagnostic testing in their community health centre and there are nurses on duty 24 hours a day. This is in a converted hospital.

Mental health, community health, social services, physiotherapy and dietary counselling continue to be offered regularly. A chiropractor visits two days a week. Pre- and post-natal classes are offered to new and prospective parents. Upgrading classes are offered in the south wing of the building. Staff are hoping to arrange to bring remedial massage therapy services to the centre in the near future.

And in regard to that particular health centre, an RN (registered nurse) at that centre has indicated that the community health centre . . . she's indicated that "the place is buzzing with activity these days," and that's a quote from this particular person out of the *Maidstone Mirror*. She's excited about the positive way health care workers have met to discuss the health needs and how best to meet them.

That same article indicates that:

The Community Health Centre is the pivot point for health services and the staff is enthusiastic about promoting wellness in the community. They want to encourage St. Walburg and area residents to suggest additional services that may be included in the future.

And the article goes on to talk about the positive approach that's being taken in that particular community. And this again is with respect to this particular district, one individual indicates in the *Maidstone Mirror* in August of '93:

"If we use our resources properly (this is the man who operates the private ambulance service in the district) we can create a more economical service with a higher quality of care than ever before."

He feels very positive about the way the district is developing. I feel good about the fact that ambulance care is considered important.

That, Mr. Speaker, is an example of communities cooperating and working together to provide good services, high-quality services, for the citizens and the residents.

And there is another article that I want to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, because I think it summarizes what's happening across Canada in a very good way. It's very basic, but it makes some good points. This is an article out of the *Vancouver Sun*, November 12, 1993. Now Bob Smith is the person that I will be quoting, and he chairs the board of the Canadian Hospital Association at this point. And he made an

observation Thursday, and this is a quote from there, while comparing the progress of reform across all 10 provinces. He said that:

. . . four provinces are motivated mostly by a vision for the future. They are B.C. (British Columbia), Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec.

This is the chair of the board of the Canadian Hospital Association saying that as he examines health reform occurring across this province, across this country, across this country of Canada, that Saskatchewan is motivated by a vision for the future. And it's true, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan have long talked about the need for a vision on health care. We saw it in the Sigerist report. We saw it in successive commissions after that, and our government worked closely with the people to do something about this, to bring together a vision in consultation with the people that would take us into the 21st century in health care.

And I want to say, we hear from the members opposite how the medical profession is upset about what we're doing, and I want to make a point once again that for the most part the medical profession is working in a cooperative fashion. There may be individuals who have complaints, but for the most part, they have been working with us. In that regard, on the Canadian Medical Association's newsletter on health reform, I want to just take a quote out of that, at page 883, September 15, 1993:

Although physicians do not perceive the impact to be imminent, they nonetheless support this wellness approach. (This is the Canadian Medical Association.) In terms of physician resource strategies, 58% of those surveyed support placing greater emphasis on "promoting wellness rather than treating illness," and 69% agree with this statement: "I think there should be much more emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention."

And that is very much a part of the direction we are moving as we move to our new health care system.

In the *Maidstone Mirror* again, one individual from Cochin, Saskatchewan, wrote this:

I firmly believe that in five years you will be hard-pressed to find anyone willing to go back to the good old days, pre-1993.

I have in my hand a whole series of people writing positive articles. And I want to raise this, Mr. Speaker, because so often all that we hear out there is the negative, the negative, the negative. This horrible thing is happening and that horrible thing is happening and this is all a mess and so on and so forth. That's all we hear for the most part.

An Hon. Member: — But it's getting to be less.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Yes, I think it is getting to be less. It's getting to be . . . There is some improvement in that

regard.

The fact is there are hundreds of people across this province, thousands of people who feel positively about the new health care system and who want to be part of the new health care system and want to be working towards improving our health care and developing a system that will take us into the 21st century; thousands of people who feel very positive about what is happening and of course they recognize that there's going to be problems.

We can't do a massive reform of this nature — a massive reform that involves just about every person in this province and thousands and thousands of employees and hundreds of different boards — we can't do a massive reform without some glitches and some problems. They'll be there.

But that doesn't mean that you throw up your hands and say it's a mess and we're not going to do anything. That's an opportunity to work together and cooperate and develop a better health care system for the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — And I have in front of me an editorial from the *Fort Qu'Appelle Times* on October 5, 1993, which says:

... while one cannot underestimate the economic blow the hospital closures meant to these communities, neither can one deny the fact that the Romanow government's complete restructuring of the province's health care system was necessary.

This province can no longer afford to keep hundreds of hospitals beds open across the province when only a very small percentage of them were in use at any one time. The millions of dollars that were being spent on these facilities can obviously be used more effectively and wisely in other areas of our health care system.

And from the *Melville Advance*, October 6:

Health Minister Louise Simard has put forward a workable plan that'll still give Saskatchewan residents top quality health care, albeit in a manner that may be different from what many of them are accustomed to.

Of course, undertaking such a massive reform plan will result in problems. To expect anything different would be unreasonable.

And there will be those (and I want the members to listen to this because this is what's happening today by Tory and Liberal oppositions) who will use those problems and glitches as ammunition to attack Simard's health reform ...

But we should remember the changes are not made for the sake of making a change. Changes are necessary. They've been long talked about and long overdue. But it's only ... (the NDP) government who've had the courage to do something about it.

And I could go on and on and on with articles of that nature, Mr. Speaker. There are people throughout this province who know that this is necessary and who know that, in order to undertake a massive reform of this nature, our government has had courage and stamina to proceed through the reform process.

And in addition to articles and newspapers, we receive letters of support and solicitations, telephone calls, expressions of support, from members of the public. One individual indicated to me the following, Mr. Speaker: we in the Kindersley district, which is represented by ... and I can't use the member's name — have been subjected to all sorts of false statements which frighten and confuse many.

But that's what's happening out there, Mr. Speaker. Another person wrote ... didn't write, had contacted us, I believe — I'm not sure whether it's a letter or not — congratulating us for our political courage. Another person advised us that they were shocked at the disgraceful abuse showered on us, and the tactics used by the opposition. They indicated that it was not a respectful clash of ideas, of proposed policies, but a belligerent, malicious, and even vicious attack on me personally.

And the expressions of support, Mr. Speaker, have gone on and on and on, so we in the government know that the people of Saskatchewan, even though there may be glitches and there may be some problems, they know in their hearts that this job has to be done. They are thankful that this government has had the courage to do it, and thousands of them are participating in the process and are being part of it.

In this health reform that we talk about, it isn't isolated to Saskatchewan, as I indicated before. It's happening across this country. Governments across this country are working in very much the same way, with different tactics being used in different areas, as I pointed out — Alberta with its massive cuts and no plan; New Brunswick with its lack of consultation; Saskatchewan trying to do it through a consultative approach, a community development approach, with a vision and a plan for the future that will lead us to a higher quality health care system as opposed to just reducing budgets.

To further us along that reduction, this budget spoke to rural initiatives fund of \$10 million, identified for rural health initiatives. It's designed to assist health reform in rural Saskatchewan. Three million will be used by the province on specific initiatives including enhanced home-based services, such as palliative care and renal dialysis, and enhanced emergency response services. Another 7 million will be allocated to districts on the basis of their very young and ageing rural populations for health promotion and disease

prevention initiatives.

Further moving along a more wellness-oriented approach, the program for breast cancer, the screening program for breast cancer, has been expanded with a funding increase to the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation. Expansion of this program by our government over the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker, has significantly increased the detection of cancers in the early stages which enhances success for treatment and recovery. We have saved lives with this program, Mr. Speaker.

We also have the Health Services Utilization Commission that is doing its job in health reform, analysing the usage of our hospitals, analysing ECGs (electrocardiogram), analysing other tests that are being done by physicians, analysing long-term care; and coming forward with scientifically based recommendations and findings for district health boards and governments to indicate. They studied the hospital system and they studied the long-term care system, and their study illustrates the pressing need for a major reorganization of our health care delivery model.

(2015)

Across Canada there have been cuts and lay-offs, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, but in Saskatchewan we have a plan and we have a vision and we have asked our Provincial Health Council to help us realize that vision.

The Provincial Health Council was established by people across this province who have a broad view of society and of services that can be delivered in society. They will be looking at the big picture, at the intersectoral approach, at issues such as health goals, as smoking issues, and other things in housing, in environment, in education that can be done by our government in a cooperative, intersectoral, interdepartmental approach to enhance the health status of Saskatchewan people and move us towards healthier lifestyles and a higher quality of life. The Provincial Health Council will help us to realize our vision.

Just today we announced a child action plan which is an interdepartmental approach to dealing with at-risk children and to try to enhance the quality of those children's lives, and the Department of Health is a part of that process.

We have also established a family planning committee that has been consulting with communities and parents and teachers and young people throughout this province to see how we can reduce the very high teenage pregnancy rate that has been with us for many years now in this province. They will be coming forward with some more detailed recommendations in the near future.

We have enhanced funding for family violence, and the Department of Health is now involved in preventative funding with respect to family violence,

Mr. Speaker, because we know that when people are in violent situations it causes tremendous amount of stress in their life and affects their health status.

So as a Department of Health working in conjunction with Social Services and other departments, we are collaborating to reduce the amount of family violence and put in preventative measures to prevent the expansion of family violence and to reduce it within our society; because our government believes that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

These are many wellness initiatives that have already been undertaken and they're only a few of many of the things that are taking place across this province and that district boards are implementing.

So what does the future hold? What will the future health care system, the new system do for us, Mr. Speaker?

It will be a strong acute care system with more emphasis on regional centres than what we have today. Now this doesn't mean a hospital in every community, because in Saskatchewan we still have a very high number of hospitals. In fact I think it's almost three times the national average of hospitals per 100,000 population.

It doesn't mean a hospital in every community but it means access to services when you need them. And it means an expansion of home-based services and community programming that leads us to a healthier society. It means more home care, more palliative care, respite care, more therapies. It means individual and community involvement, and responsibility, where that's appropriate, for our health and our health care system.

We are also looking at the establishment of group medical practices throughout the province. And the funding of these medical practices will be different from place to place. For example we may be looking at funding based on a per capita basis in an area where there's a group medical practice. We may look at getting into an arrangement with the doctors where they go on salary, or there may be some fee for service, and some per capita funding depending on the individual situation. There may be contractual arrangements or there may be some sessional payments for time-based practices.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, what we'll be doing is experimenting with the medical profession to establish group medical practices and to experiment with different forms of remuneration. Doctors are already asking to be a part of that process in Saskatchewan and we've already . . . We have the Nipawin experiment and we are looking at other . . . at doing this in other parts of the province.

We want to move to needs-based funding. Needs-based funding for health care. That means that it will be based on population. There will be an age and gender factor taken into consideration. Also the difference in costs from one area to the next. But we

want to move the health care system to funding for needs.

In the past, the health care system was funded based on how many services you used the year before so there was incentive for people to stack their hospitals, and to stack their services, because it would mean that their services in the future would be funded at that level or greater. We want to move the health care system to funding based on needs so that if there is a demonstrated need it's funded. But we don't fund simply to keep a facility open, whether it's needed or not.

But this new funding formula will be phased in over a period of time, Mr. Speaker. It cannot be implemented overnight. The reason being is that some areas of the province have received a very generous amount of home care funding, and other areas of the province have not been so lucky over the years. This formula will make the distribution of funding more equitable throughout the province, but it does mean some will gain, and some will lose, and so it has to be done in a very slow process, so it can be phased in. However there will be more said on that as that formula becomes implemented and more public.

We want to establish multidisciplinary teams throughout the province of health care workers working side by side with doctors and nurses, working side by side with social workers, with mental health workers, with public health workers, with addiction counselling services, with teachers and other health care professionals within the community. We believe that we can strengthen the health care system if health professionals can work as teams. We've witnessed that in community clinics in this province in the past and in community health centres where we've had an opportunity to experiment with health professionals working together. If they can work together as a team, then there will not be such an overlap of services, and health professionals will also appreciate the skills of the other professionals with whom they are working.

Nurses can be given more responsibility than what they've had in the past. We know that in remote communities such as northern Saskatchewan they have had to take this responsibility. And they can take more responsibility. So we will be looking at an expanded role for nurses. In fact 35 nurses are currently enrolled in the advanced clinical training nursing program to give nurses advanced clinical training and diagnostic skills, so they can work where we need them the most: in remote rural and remote northern communities, but eventually this program will be established so we have advanced clinical nurse practitioners throughout the entire province.

The government is looking at the possibility of midwives in the province. We know that some jurisdictions have already moved in this direction, and I think it's time for Saskatchewan to examine that possibility and to see how they could work with doctors in our health care system. We know that we need more support to allow individuals to stay in their communities and in their homes as long as possible.

And so we're looking at palliative care that will allow people to stay in their homes longer. We've increased funding for home-based services. We're looking at more home oxygen therapy with . . . the department is looking at all sorts of ways in conjunction with district boards that we can allow individuals to stay in their homes longer.

Mr. Speaker, there are some other items that I wish to point out that we can be seeing in the future with respect to health care reform. And that is that there will be a devolution to district boards of community-based services.

Now what we mean by that is that there many workers right now who are working at the departmental level under the Department of Health. Their jobs will be devolved to the district boards. And although the department will maintain responsibility for standards, and for setting salaries, and for making sure that there are supports to these people in the districts, their jobs will actually be devolved to district boards and they will be closer to local communities and part of that process.

We will be having future discussions as to the role of health care professionals as we move to these multidisciplinary teams. We want to know what the role of health service providers should be into the 21st century.

We want to reduce any barriers there are to health information. It's very difficult for people to receive information about their individual health or about other matters in general with respect to health. We want to reduce any barriers that there are to health information so that people will be better educated about health care services and their own health.

We do need major education services, then, Mr. Speaker, to provide information about the need for individual responsibility.

In conclusion, then, I want to say that the continuance of the second stage of health reform — and I refer to it as the second stage of this health reform, the first stage was to set up the district boards — the second stage is to enhance programing and move to a more wellness-oriented health care system, and we are now in that stage.

There will be . . . In summary then, there will be ongoing increases in the development, implementation, and utilization of community-based health services, and a decrease in dependence on traditional institutional health care, although institutional health care will remain strong.

There will be an increased emphasis on client-centred approaches to health services. What that means is this: people will be better educated and health professionals will be better educated to work in conjunction with individuals and communities as they deliver services — a more people-orientated approach.

There will be increasing community and individual involvement in decision making and an increasing emphasis on health outcomes. Now that is very important because all the health economists and all of the health people across this province talk about the need to look at health outcomes because the health care system has simply paid money without analysing whether or not it results in an improved health status for people in Canada. And we know that there are countries that pay less than we do on health care and have a better health status. So they're doing something that we're not doing and we have to determine what services result in an improved health status and what the health outcomes are to particular programing. That should be integral to the new health system.

We will also be adopting healthier public policies. The Provincial Health Council is going to help us develop those policies so that we can move to a society that is more cognizant of healthy lifestyles and more cognizant of the interrelationship of many factors such as environment and housing and poverty and the economy on our health. So that when we are talking about environmental policies we are also thinking of the health impacts. When we are talking about poverty we are thinking of the health impacts and trying to build that into our programing. There will be increased coordination and integration of mandates then which affect health, social services, environment, and housing.

(2030)

And that is some of the things that we can expect to see in the months and years to come as Saskatchewan people continue to develop the new health care system that will be more responsive to individual people and to communities, that will result in more community involvement and more community control. And it will provide a higher quality of life for Saskatchewan people and better quality health care services.

In conclusion then, I want to once again thank the many, many people across Saskatchewan who have worked very, very hard to get to this stage and whom I know are going to continue to work over the next few months and years to realize this vision — the vision of health care for the 21st century, a vision that is recognized by the chair of the Canadian Hospital Association who has said that Saskatchewan is one of four provinces that is working from a vision.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that as health reform continues, Saskatchewan people will reap the benefits of the very hard work that they're doing today. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise tonight to voice my strong support for the balanced budget plan of our government, and more specifically, this year's budget as presented by the member from Saskatoon Westmount.

Few people realize, Mr. Speaker, the many hours and hours of deliberation and presentation and consultation that must go into the preparing of a budget such as the one that was brought forward in this Assembly last week. And I think that we all owe the minister responsible for Finance a debt of gratitude for the many hours that she's put in over this last year to deliver the promise, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — It's a promise that started with the first budget that we delivered in this Assembly and started with the hours of work, the many hours of travel, that were put in by our member from Regina north east.

And I know the residents in my area of the city have also commented to me time and time again the work that had to go into cleaning up the mess, understanding where we were in that first budget year, and trying to adjust our plans and expectations to come in with that first budget, Mr. Speaker. And they have stood behind the member from Regina north east in the consideration and deliberation that he also put in to get us to this point where we're delivering the promise for Saskatchewan.

There are many reasons for my support of the budget, Mr. Speaker, but today I will highlight four areas that I feel are very important to all residents of Saskatchewan.

I'm not going to go further into the areas of health care reform except to say that I stand behind the Minister of Health and the work and the presentation that she put before us tonight when we talk about the second generation of health care that was contemplated by Tommy and that's being carried forward by the people of Saskatchewan as we go into the revolution that's occurring in health care reform today.

The four areas that I want to speak on this evening, and they're in no prioritized order, but the first one that I'm going to outline would be first things first, the financial integrity, the openness and accountability of delivering the promise. Many people call this, Mr. Speaker, honesty. And as a member earlier today from the Tory benches talked about: he wouldn't maybe recognize that clearly when it hit him in the face because I don't think for 10 years that we saw delivering on any promises that the former government made to the people of this province.

The second area I'd like to speak about is the area of jobs, economic development and jobs. And the third is the human face of our budget — support for those most vulnerable in today's society. And it will be last but by no means least that I want to end and conclude my remarks this evening by giving credit where credit is due — to the wonderful people of the province of Saskatchewan, the people who have made this a great province and have been helping us to deliver the promise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — I don't want to spend a long time dwelling on the way we were. Many stories have been told and people understand what happened in this province. But I think it's important to have people remember, and I know the people in the province have excellent memories that they will not forget easily the failure of the Tories' policies or the short-sightedness of their give-aways to their greedy buddies.

However, it is important to see what we have done to restore the public trust, to see where we have come from, and how we've worked to deliver on the promise. My colleagues will all remember that first session when, as a new government, we had to meet to clear up the irresponsible mess left by the former government the year before we arrived.

That year before we arrived, I had been a member of Regina City Council, one of the municipalities that was talked about as a partner in relationship to this government, who rely on third-party funding for some of their budgeting.

And as a member of the city council, what did we see? We didn't see budgets finalized early to give people an understanding of where the province stands and whether or not they could deliver on the promise to the third parties involved. We didn't see budget details in time to set mill rates or put notices out to the residents that would reflect careful budget deliberation and understand what could be expected from a senior level of government.

You can imagine the havoc to those plans of the municipalities when provincial budgets were consistently late, and they were consistently withdrawing more and more from programs and services and the dollars needed to deliver those services to third parties.

And I can remember a time, as I mentioned earlier, in this province when we saw a withdrawal of funding from the city of Regina of over \$9 million that one year. And it wasn't taking the city aside and saying very early on, there's going to be a major withdrawal of funding, you should be prepared, to get them to understand the situation that the former government was in, or even begin to see the magnitude of the hit that was going to happen to the city of Regina. They weren't alone in that. But in particular this one year I remember well because it was over \$9 million. And we learned of this withdrawal of funding in July, halfway through a budget year, when cities are least equipped to handle a withdrawal of monies of that magnitude.

You can imagine the frustration and the upsettiness when we hear that it's 85 years of Saskatchewan being a province, and so while the city is losing money in that magnitude, we're now going to have a birthday party where the members opposite can go across the province and stand on a podium and say that they're going to deliver to the residents of Saskatchewan \$9 million worth of birthday party.

I remember it well, the members of city council coming together, my colleagues coming together trying to stay calm and make serious decisions on what we were going to cut back, how we were going to adjust with that short notice and halfway into our budget year. And there were very serious decisions that had to be taken in a very short time. And when you talk about that and the impact on jobs in the community, I can still remember that we owed a debt of thanks to the senior management team who helped us through those difficult times, who tried to put together alternatives and lead us through some very difficult deliberations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that was one year. But the members opposite topped that in 1991 when economic development in Saskatchewan was called Fair Share Saskatchewan, and the plan was to arbitrarily move families across the province, out of Regina. The Liquor Board moved to Hudson Bay. Try and get dealers and people in to talk to people in Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan and the hours that they would be travelling to do that. And where there were the fewest seniors in the province, the Seniors' Secretariat would move to St. Walburg.

And when you looked more closely at this Fair Share economic development strategy, you knew that it meant in some cases the mom was going to move to one community and the dad would be moving off in another direction. That does not talk about support for families and it doesn't do anything for the economic development in this province, except move the deck chairs around on the *Titanic*. And that's what we saw from the members opposite.

And when you talk about funding to third parties such as health care institutions, you can see almost the same kind of thing that happened in Alberta was happening toward the end of the Tory era in Saskatchewan.

As the vice-chair of the Pioneer Village board in Regina, I remember very well Black Wednesday when, as the Health minister at the time, Mr. McLeod was announcing that there was going to be a 3 per cent increase to the pool for health care. They pulled together at the Plains Health Centre people of the communities and urban centres, and home care, and other organizations and say, you will hear that today in our budget deliberation and announcement, but remember that's to the pool and that money's already been spent in short-term, short-sighted, political-gain projects throughout the province. For you, you can look at a decrease in the order of 5, 6 and in many cases, adding inflation on to budget processes, in the magnitude of a 10 per cent withdrawal in one year from health care spending in those sectors in this province — not unlike the Tories in Alberta, who in one year are announcing devastating cut-backs without a plan in that province.

The same year budget diligence hit a new low and there was no budget passed. The member from Estevan tried to tell himself: I thought I passed a

budget, I thought that happened; tried to convince high school students that there really was a budget in the province of Saskatchewan, but there was no budget passed.

This left us as a province operating solely on special warrants until we could bring in that first financial report, and that was late in December. We knew by then we would be galloping to prepare for some of the most difficult decisions we would have to ever make in the history of this province. But we were true to our election promises and our promise of open and honesty and first things first, open the books and let's see what's really happening in the province of Saskatchewan, what went on.

We began that process with an independent commission to let the people of Saskatchewan know what had been done with their hard-earned tax dollars. Mr. Speaker, the one thing I heard most often from my constituents was, we know you have a tough job, but we want fiscal integrity. We want fiscal integrity restored to this province. We're prepared to help out as long as you're fair and you are honest with us. I know it made us all very angry. We were upset, we were angry about the mess that had been left to us. It was not of our making, but we had to clean it up. No easy task.

So what did we do? First we changed our method of accounting so we would be fairly and openly reflecting the spending of the province in the year that the debt occurs. No more, oops, I seem to have missed by a billion or so; oh well, we've gotten past that election year. This change, Mr. Speaker, is a significant accountability mechanism in itself.

But why would we do this move to accrual accounting? The average person in Saskatchewan doesn't really know what accrual accounting is or what it would mean to them. I've just learned how that impacts on us ourselves and myself this year when we were talking about it.

It's not a great news story. You obviously haven't heard it covered in the media and the press. Of course it's a good news story for the accountability to people in this province.

It's not a great news story, Mr. Speaker, but it is delivering the promise of accountability and making sure there's a mechanism in place that this province will never see again — the billion-dollar-oops mistakes of the former government.

What else have we done in keeping the promise? We've provided the public with audited financial reports for each and every Crown corporation, agency, board and commission, and on time, Mr. Speaker, in a timely basis and not a few years after the fact.

We provide mid-year updates to the people letting them know whether or not we're meeting our targets. And we provide summary financial statements to give our taxpayers the complete picture of our province's

financial position. This is delivering on the promise.

Saskatchewan's financial watchdog, the Provincial Auditor, says these are the most useful financial statements issued by a senior government in Canada. Even my sternest critics, Mr. Speaker, and I'm hoping they're only a few, admit that we are an open, accountable, and honest government, Mr. Speaker. And that is high praise indeed where I come from.

(2045)

The second area I want to speak about this evening is jobs. I'm a mother of two teenagers and usually my home is home to many more young adults. They want to be able to work in this province, to make their homes here, and be the future taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan.

They like our key priority in the *Partnership for Renewal* document and that priority is full employment. They watched with great interest, the night of the budget, what the Liberal leader would say. And so we sat by the television and we watched to see what her answer would be to the important question of full employment and jobs. And were they surprised. She didn't have one idea to put forward. It was slam and blast but not to put forward one creative idea for the teenagers that I know and that I respect for having intelligence, would be able to understand if she would put forward an alternative for them in economic development and jobs.

They wanted to know what she meant when she said, well the Liberals would create an economic climate. Is that the same climate as all the other provinces governed by Liberals? Because if it's so, that means higher overall taxation, higher overall charges and rates, and these provinces haven't even begun to address their deficit situations.

So the next question: could it be that the Liberals would deliver on jobs by exploring new suggestions and new ideas and creativity that she hears from within her party and her members? But wait. She has yet to bring to this Assembly, or to the minister responsible for Economic Development, one new idea.

Aha! So it must be that the Liberal strategy is going to be jobs through increased productivity and a safe and fair work environment for the working men and women in this province. And again, the young people are not only disappointed by the Leader of the Liberal Party, but upset.

I've shown them the quote in the Yorkton press in December, a quote on occupational health and safety and workers' compensation. And what does the Liberal Party say about these pieces of legislation? That they're irrelevant to the people of Saskatchewan — irrelevant, Mr. Speaker. Occupational health and safety that's progressive, leading the way in this country, workers' compensation — that is irrelevant. But she goes on and condemns, sight unseen, the labour legislation that will be considered and that is

going to be considered in this Assembly, that was highlighted in the throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the young people of this province look to our government for the answer to economic development and jobs and not the Liberal Party, who tout the New Brunswick model. Our Minister of Social Services earlier today talked about the New Brunswick model. There was another occasion, on the night of the North West by-election, when I heard the member opposite say that the model they were going to follow was the McKenna model, a McKenna model on budgeting. Well let's tell the people of Saskatchewan what the Liberal model looks like.

The Liberal model is a \$400 million deficit in the province, a province as small as New Brunswick and the Maritimes, \$400 million and spiralling. This is according to *The Globe And Mail*. A province led by a Liberal government that has 11 per cent provincial sales tax on most goods and services, and from quotes from the member opposite, she'd be in favour of supporting a taxation . . . a broadening of the taxation to cover such things like food. That's the Liberal model.

When you look in comparison to the utility rates and charges in this province, you see the Liberal McKenna model is that a combined utility charges for a family of four is \$1,000 more than the province of Saskatchewan, \$1,000 a year more. And yet the members opposite stand and tell us that they were not going to consider increasing utility rates and charges. Wonder where the money is going to come from for the Liberal model of economic development?

All of this and we know that there's higher unemployment rates in those provinces led by the Liberal governments than there is in Saskatchewan. Well that's the Liberal party model, and they tout the New Brunswick McKenna model of budgeting and cannot support delivering the promise, as we've done in the budget before us.

It's a reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why on all fronts we're committed to act to promote economic recovery that's now occurring in this province. It won't be the boom/bust megaprojects that will provide long-term, sustainable benefits or the flip-flop, gee, I haven't got any ideas of the Liberals across from us, but it will be the small, targeted steps that will move us forward in economic development and jobs. It will be the small steps that support communities working in cooperation who will tell us what jobs can be sustained on the Main Streets through the province of Saskatchewan. Our Finance minister has outlined many of these, but they are worth mentioning again. And I refer to the budget address, *Delivering the Promise*, and I'd like to restate these because, as I mentioned earlier, good news stories don't usually make the pages of the press.

Our economic development plan involves focusing on proven strengths identified by communities pulling together and talking about what those strengths are in

our *Partnership for Renewal* plan. And they tell us that they support the elimination of tax on direct agents used in manufacturing and processing, and it will be completely phased out by July 1 of 1994.

They support the pioneering of a single-window approach to economic development programs in the province of Saskatchewan; the reduction of government red tape for small businesses; a revised royalty structure for oil and gas industry to encourage new investment; a north-west forest renewal partnership plan with funding of \$226,000 in 1994 and '95, and \$104,000 in 1995-96; and the continuation of the planned reduction in small business corporate income tax rate with the reduction to 8.5 per cent of corporate taxable income this year and a further reduction to 8 per cent in 1995. Because, Mr. Speaker, in over four years, when we reduce the small business corporate income tax rate by 20 per cent, small business tells us that more dollars will be in their hands. That translates into more jobs in the Main Streets of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — In our budget document we also highlight that our Crown corporations in government will spend \$700 million on much-needed capital projects. It goes further to say that this budget will mean exporting more Saskatchewan products and services to the world market-place.

This budget will help do that with total funding of \$6 million for the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation — the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation that will focus our economic development activity and will lead to more jobs, but not through the give-aways to a few, but to supported and sustainable and accountable jobs, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that this budget redirects over \$4 million to a strategy for economic renewal in northern Saskatchewan. This will be done through assisting local people to process and market products grown or produced in northern Saskatchewan. It will help local businesses to supply northern mines with goods and services that they require. And it will provide training programs for northern people so that they can take advantage of these new opportunities.

Our farm families will also be involved through *Agriculture 2000* strategy. There will be \$20 million invested over the next four years in value added projects, \$1.4 million to improve products and enhance markets for the beef industry, and we're working hard to develop a whole new farm safety net program.

It's no accident, Mr. Speaker, that jobs and employment were mentioned at least 15 times in an over-20-minute budget speech. No accident, Mr. Speaker, it's delivering the promise.

I want to refer back, Mr. Speaker, to a time when again I was talking about being a member of city council. I had the opportunity to chair the task force on

women's issues. I was a member of the mayor's inquiry into hunger, and served as a chair of the community services committee. I saw firsthand the results of 10 years of a right-wing agenda — 10 years of a right-wing agenda that I see being now vocalized by the members of the Liberal Party.

You can see values of compassion and caring were being replaced with the "me first" greed and victim-blaming attitudes displayed by the Tory provincial leaders and we now hear being displayed by the leaders of the Liberal Party.

This cuts deeply into my being, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as my beliefs are grounded in the principles and the philosophy of my family roots, the CCF and NDP — the philosophy and the principles of community, cooperation, and compassion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Our leader stated many times in some of his speeches he's delivered throughout the province that times change, our values don't. It's not with shaky temerity that we refer back to Tommy. It's not with a sense of retreat that we talk about the budget of Fines. It's with a sense of pride in where we're going, to understand and know where we've come from.

As my colleague, the Minister of Social Services, talked about this afternoon, there was a quote from Tommy in 1954 that stated, and I quote:

The philosophy of this government is "Humanity First". We believe that the measure of any community is the amount of social and economic security which it provides for even its humblest citizens.

And in our times our party and our leader, the Hon. Premier of Saskatchewan, and my colleagues seated with me in this legislature, have been quoted as saying that we're:

New Democrat(s) because (we) believe in economic and social justice — in a society which seeks fairness, compassion and equity in all its affairs.

I'm proud to be a part of this heritage — from Douglas to our Premier, from Fines to our Finance minister — because it's a budget and a time of humanity first. Humanity first, brought about through budgets with commitment to these words: a living budget of monetary commitment to improve the quality of life, seek fairness, compassion, and equity in all its affairs for even its humblest citizens. A budget that even in the face of financial burden has begun the job of delivering the promise of humanity first.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think that even my colleagues have taken the time to sit back and reflect on what we've done to live up to the

promises to the people of Saskatchewan. And in the times of very difficult economic restraint, what we've still been able to accomplish for even the humblest of our citizens.

And I want to run through some of those and recap what we've done since we've been in office, because people want to hear what we've done, and not the havoc and the wreck of the last 10 years of a right-wing agenda, but what we've done, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(2100)

So in 1992 there was grants to child care centres that were increased by 21 per cent. Funding for child hunger programs which were increased by 35 per cent. The Saskatchewan child tax reduction for low income families was increased by 25 per cent to \$250 per child annually and that was effective July 1, 1992. There was additional funding of \$28 million provided for Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, which included provision for rate increases. In total, funding for this exceeded \$230 million.

In 1992 home care funding was increased by nearly 20 per cent to \$38 million, to expand and enhance services such as nursing, meals, and home maintenance. The northern food allowance for the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan was doubled, doubled each month.

A total of \$20 million went to family support programs like counselling for teenage mothers and victims of family violence. Funding was provided to expand the breast cancer screening program at that time to include Saskatoon and three satellite centres, and we now know to include the entire province. And on the recommendation of the Minimum Wage Board, the minimum wage was increased to 5.35 per hour from \$5 an hour. In 1992, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I go on to 1993, leaving behind many things unsaid about what we were able to accomplish for the people of Saskatchewan in '92, but I don't want to go on too long and lose track of the growing numbers of things we've been able to provide in a budget that talks about a living budget and people first.

So in 1993 home care funding was further increased to \$43 million from \$38 million the year before. A total of \$18 million was provided for programs that directly benefit children, including funding for child care, the hunger programs, the revised dental programs targeted to children in low income families. And in 1993, 3.8 million was provided to establish a new child benefit program to support children in low income families.

Another million dollars was provided to enhance the enforcement of maintenance orders to ensure parents live up to their responsibilities. And almost \$14 million was targeted in 1993 for programs to promote Indian and Metis training and employment. A total of a million dollars was provided for a child nutrition and development program. The program would provide

grants to urban and rural communities around the province to help establish nutrition programs for hungry children. A total of \$3 million to the Blair Memorial Cancer Clinic in Regina and the Saskatoon Cancer Centre. Funding totalling \$5.2 million was provided to create 1,250 jobs for people receiving social assistance under the community employment program.

In 1993 additional funding was provided to expand the teen parent program for expectant teenage mothers to help them and encourage them to stay in school. In the area of education, we saw reviews being conducted of all our educational institutions to determine their effectiveness and to formulate recommendations for future directions. We established an Education Council to advise us on key issues and options for education. This new approach involved parents, teachers, students, the business community, and labour — partnerships for renewal, partnerships in education. We heard earlier, partnerships in health.

We have implemented changes to the administration of the student aid program to provide information to students quickly. We've maintained the six-month interest-free period before students must begin to repay the loans, and that's despite the federal government's elimination of the same for Canadian student loan programs.

We initiated the program to address the needs of at-risk children and their families so that government agencies and community organizations would be involved and coordinate and integrate their approach to these important issues. And as we've heard today, the child action plan this year will go a step further.

We've supported literacy programs and initiated substantial funding for Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's workplace literacy program. 1993 saw the introduction of two key Bills, The Occupational Health and Safety Act in response to the demands of workers for safer and healthier workplaces. The legislation became the first of its kind to deal with harassment and violence in the workplace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — There were amendments to The Workers' Compensation Act that were made to protect Saskatchewan's workers. The legislative reforms provided for a better system of benefits and rehabilitation for injured workers.

So now we look ahead to the days ahead and to what's been projected in our budget this year and our agenda before us, and what do we see? The announcement today of \$4.4 million added to the child action plan, \$10 million for rural health care initiatives. We're into the third year of increases for the infant care services to help teen parents attend high school.

We're looking at the victims of domestic violence Act that will be introduced to provide remedies to address situations of immediate danger and to minimize the

disruption to the victims' lives. We're looking at expansion of the Unified Family Court program on a province-wide basis. This will ensure that the justice system deals with family breakdown and other family law issues involving children in a more responsive, more supportive, and less adversarial manner.

We're looking at the changes to The Ombudsman Act to amend that Act and establish the child's advocate, again delivering a promise. And we'll be dealing with two important pieces of labour legislation that have been under much-needed review — a broad consultation process with all the players involved. We may not come to a complete consensus, but we must move ahead on these two pieces of legislation to accommodate the changing needs of the labour force.

Amendments to The Labour Standards Act will have the greatest benefit for those 70,000 people working in Saskatchewan's lowest wage jobs, most of whom are women and the young children in this province, young adults.

The Trade Union Act will also be amended to accommodate the changing needs of the labour force. Amendments to this Act will insure that it's a fair, balanced, and up-to-date approach while at the same time encouraging a healthy climate for job creation and economic development.

Mr. Speaker, this is delivering the promise.

From our days as a new government we have worked together to present to our people a plan. It started with the first budget when we came out into this House knowing it would be tough, asking for understanding and support from the people of Saskatchewan not for ourselves, not for a balanced budget alone, but for our children and their children.

I would restate the closing quote in last year's budget that highlights this for all people in the province:

Together, we are uniting behind a plan to ensure that all that makes us fortunate today is there for tomorrow.

Living within our means is the only way to guarantee that what we all enjoy today is passed on to our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, we don't want to say to our children: we couldn't clean up this mess, we want you to do it, we're going to leave it all for you, we'll wring our hands and walk away and create more.

A balanced budget is the only way and the mechanism we have to guarantee that what we're enjoying today is going to be in place for our children — my children, and your children.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it is only fitting that we now give high praise and credit

where credit is due and that is to all people in the province. Not only the people in my constituency that I thank for their efforts and their standing behind us in these very difficult times, but all people in this province and all constituencies, including those that I've heard from the members of the constituencies of the Liberals and the Tories, all people in this province standing behind us to try and get some rhyme or reason to the mess for the next generation.

So to the people of the province I say: you gave us your support; you've given us your hard work in consultation processes in health, in economic development, in getting down and doing the work that needed to be done in this province to come together; and they've given us the understanding that we needed while these processes are ongoing and bearing some fruit.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was with great pride in all the people of Saskatchewan that I rose last Thursday with my colleagues and the Minister of Finance, the member from Saskatoon Westmount, to say thank you — thank you to the people of this province — and it's why I stand today in support of our budget that delivers our promise to all of you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by congratulating my seat-mate, the member for Regina Wascana, for just an excellent job of going through many of our accomplishments. I listened with a great deal of interest to a growing list of accomplishments that we have taken, that we've been a part of since we formed the government in October 1991.

And I know we are often our own harshest critics. We always want to be able to deliver more and better and faster. I don't think there's any of my colleagues ever got elected on the premiss that, well we'll just coast along for a while. We are all pushing very diligently, particularly in the areas that we have a little bit of extra interest in which leads to the opening part of my remarks.

And that was that of thanking the Minister of Finance, and the Deputy Premier before that, for the job that they have done in consulting, respecting the budget. Mr. Speaker, you would be aware that there has been broad consultation throughout the Saskatchewan public — broad. I think it's safe to say never been more consultation throughout the province than has been delivered by the two successive Finance ministers of this government.

But the consultation that has been sadly missing, certainly in the previous government, was that of a consultation and an involvement of government caucus members. I know that the members opposite seem terribly surprised when back-bench MLAs get up and speak in support of the measures that this government has taken. But the simple reason, Mr. Speaker, that I can stand so proudly, so in support of this budget that delivers the promise, is that I've been

involved as a back-bench MLA in the consultation within the caucus. And I can remember the very first budget we delivered. I remember full well at the end of the first day, going home and my wife saying, well how did it go? I saying, well thank goodness today's over; we got all the bad news out of the way. There just can't possibly be any more bad news.

And — lo and behold! — I went back the next day, and they started throwing the real big problems, the real big economic problems at us. And I recall very distinctly at just after 11 o'clock catching myself with some tears rolling down my cheeks because, Mr. Speaker, at that point I realized that many of the hopes that I had for immediately re-implementing a children's dental program for example, a school-based children's dental program, much as I would have wanted that and still want it, it was simply unattainable.

(2115)

The consultation of the caucus has been absolutely phenomenal. And it's part of why I can be so proud of having sat in my chair here at my desk when the budget was being delivered, and about a half an hour into the Minister of Finance's speech, I pulled out one of my MLA business cards and wrote a little note on the back and left it in my desk because I didn't want to lose it. And what I wrote was very simple: solid foundation. That was the impression that I had a half an hour into the speech: solid foundation based on the thorough discussions that we've had. Certainly cabinet has them, but I'm not privy to who says what in cabinet. But I certainly am privy to who says what in the caucus, and I am intensely proud of the contributions that every single one of my colleagues have made on behalf of their constituents and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, delivering the promise, I think that's what this budget is really all about. We promise to meet our deficit reduction targets. We promise it and we deliver.

And I look at the historical record of budget delivery and I noted with a great deal of interest that — here it is — that the previous government had only missed by \$75 million in the last budget that they audited and delivered in the legislature, that of 1991. In '92 they missed by \$587 million — just a little oops. And I go back to the previous election year, 1986, which I recall very vividly, when then Finance minister Gary Lane projected a \$389 million deficit. And he delivered the very next budget, where the deficit wasn't 389 million; it was \$1.235 billion. He was out \$846 million.

And here we are, having delivered a budget bang on what we said. We projected a deficit to come in at \$296 million. It came in at \$294 million, just right on, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because we think the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know what it is we want to do and to know that we're determined to deliver

what we say. Part of that — and I came to appreciate this from the consultation that has gone on in the caucus and indeed when we've had some Finance department officials in — part of it is because this government will base its budget projections not on some airy-fairy, oh well let's write a budget on the back of a piece of scrap paper.

Any fool can balance a budget on a piece of paper. All you have to do is use the price of oil at \$30 a barrel or the price of wheat going to \$8 a bushel. Any fool can write a balanced budget on the back of a scrap piece of paper. But it takes the real test — the real test — for the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Thunder Creek, is to get a budget that is written, that you can deliver. And deliver is exactly what the Minister of Finance and my colleagues have done.

I'm real proud of the cabinet. We delivered a budget. We said, here it is, stood up, delivered it in the legislature and got within \$2 million on a more than a \$4 billion annual budget. A remarkable feat and one that you should learn a great deal from.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Now, Mr. Speaker, of course saying what we're going to do with respect to a budget and then delivering it is an important part of the process, but we should never lose sight of the fact that balancing the budget, which is what we've been working towards, balancing the budget is not an end in itself. But as the Premier repeatedly points out to us, balancing the budget is the means to the end.

The means to us being able to again introduce a school-based children's dental program that I talked of a little bit earlier. A means for us to get more directly involved in job creation projects. A means for us to help scratch the itch where it might mean a few extra jobs throughout Saskatchewan.

But frankly it's a means that we have not benefited much from. We've seen the first beginning signs of it with the delivery of this budget, but you know, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people at all levels of income understand what it is I'm just saying.

My colleague, the member for Regina Churchill Downs, has said to me on several occasions that there's no level of income at which one cannot live beyond. And I happen to think that the hon. member is right on. There's no level of income at which one cannot live beyond. There's always more that we would wish.

There's always a desire to be able to provide more, be it for ourselves . . . maybe it's a vacation or maybe it's a vehicle to replace the 1988 Plymouth Colt with 170,000 kilometres on it. Maybe it is simply to provide a swing set for your children.

And I know what I speak of there because I've lived that. I remember vividly us moving into Regina and the first winter, Mr. Speaker, Santa Claus, actually I think my parents had a hand in it, delivered a coat, a

winter coat under the Christmas tree. I was going without a winter coat that year because we'd bought the house and frankly, we were very, very house poor. But I felt well, we had the house, at least I could be warm once I got home.

Anyway, I got that. Then that summer for my 25th birthday, my parents bought me a swing set. I confess I thought it was a little bit late in my life for them to be doing that, but they felt that their two grandchildren, that my wife and I share, might enjoy my swing set and indeed they did, as did our third child when she came along.

I just have to throw this in as a matter of interest, Mr. Speaker. I turned 40 last summer and these same parents who had bought me a swing set for my 25th birthday — I'm not sure what this says about what they think of their favourite son — but they bought me a composter and a shovel to go along with it. So I can hardly wait until I turn 50 and then 60 and then 65 and see what my parents think of their favourite son at that stage.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to just touch briefly . . . I talked about the budget and I want to quote from *Burns Fry Economics* dated February 17, and this is a quote:

The Romanow government is developing an excellent track record in reducing the enormous deficit it inherited. The province continues to have the highest per capita debt levels in the country, but key debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratios are expected to stabilize this year and then begin to decline. We expect the government to continue to hit its targets and therefore view the provincial credit rating outlook as positive.

Mr. Speaker, I'm quite proud of that because as our credit rating improves, our interest costs in borrowing will decline, and that will help us further in our delivering the promise.

I'm going to talk very briefly about utilities because, Mr. Speaker, frankly we have used comparisons that talk about Saskatchewan taxes, then we throw in utilities and we point out that once you count power, home heating, gas, natural gas, SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) rates and telephone rates, that Saskatchewan goes from being a very high cost-of-living province to one of the lowest cost provinces.

Other colleagues have covered that very, very well with the exception I haven't heard anybody in the legislature want to throw in the price of housing as well, and that's a major benefit, price of housing. I don't think my aunt and uncle in Toronto would feel bad when I put it this way. They have a three bedroom bungalow. My wife and I have a three bedroom bungalow. Theirs is in Toronto; ours is, of course, here in the north end of Regina. If you were to, or anyone else, Mr. Speaker, were to write me a cheque that didn't bounce for \$100,000, I can guarantee that you'd have the keys for my bungalow in almost no

time flat. It's yours. I don't think you'd be too hardly done by, but I'd be doing all right too.

But I wouldn't trade my bungalow for my aunt and uncle's bungalow in Toronto and I don't think they would take a mere 250,000 or a quarter of a million dollars. So you see the housing advantage in Saskatchewan is indeed very, very significant. I can afford to own a house in Regina. I don't think that I could afford that luxury — it would become a luxury — in Toronto . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Vancouver is very similar as the member for Regina Wascana has just indicated to me.

The Leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, has been very fond of talking about New Brunswick and Frank McKenna, using a dual-prong approach, and his being a realistic and rational approach to budgeting and to running a province. I find it kind of interesting in that I've got here, dated February 21, a fiscal update from New Brunswick for its '93-'94 budget and I see that their deficit this year goes from 349 to 451 million dollars — an increase of \$102 million. Oops — they were out by 29.2 per cent.

Now the two-pronged approach, Mr. Speaker, seems to me that you want to balance your spending and your revenues collected and I see that they have overspent by 15 per cent and underestimated . . . pardon me, overestimated revenue. They collected, actually, 85 per cent less revenue than they thought they would. I'm talking the percentages of the \$102 million. They overspent by 15 million. They underestimated . . . they didn't underestimate — they overestimated their revenue coming in and they got \$87 million less.

So they don't seem to have it right, Mr. Speaker. And I would just caution the Leader of the Liberal Party not to hitch her horse too closely to Frank McKenna's Liberal government in New Brunswick. It seems to me to be a horse destined not to get out of the starting gates. They're doing some things decently in New Brunswick, but it's not the great thing that we're led to believe it is.

As I'm winding down, Mr. Speaker, I do want to make one final comment, and that is about the difference between deficit and debt. The deficit is simply the amount of money we spend extra in a year, over and above our revenues. This year the deficit that we just delivered, we spent \$294 million more than we took in in revenue. That added to the fourteen and a half billion dollar debt we inherited when we formed the government. But that's added to the debt.

In 1996-97, if our projections are accurate, we will actually have a \$20 million surplus. But I want people to very clearly understand, Mr. Speaker, that mountain of debt, that \$15 billion, because it will have grown from fourteen and a half, that roughly \$15 billion dollars debt will still be there. Or put another way, we've still got a huge mortgage. But we will be paying the principal and interest, or the interest on that mortgage on an annual basis, once we hit a balanced budget, so we'll stop adding to our debt.

And of course there's no way of running from that forever.

(2130)

But the reason I talk about that, Mr. Speaker, is simply that there are still some individuals who seem to have the impression that we're paying off the entire debt that we inherited from the former Conservative government, that we're paying the entire debt off in three or four years. And that just simply, much as we might wish we could do that, it is simply an impossible task. But we're going to stop adding to it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by again commending the Minister of Finance. I think this budget is just wonderful and I think that it was summed up very well by an article in Friday's *Leader-Post* titled, "NDP has taken all the fun out of budget day." And it's a column . . . I might as well say it. Bruce Johnstone wrote it.

The whole premiss of his column, Mr. Speaker, is that we are just so upfront. This is what we're going to do, we say, and then we go out and we do it. There was absolutely no surprises. What we said we were going to do, we did.

And I think that that certainty is something, that in the absence of a great economic boom, at least we have the certainty of knowing we've got a Finance minister that is steady, that will deliver us, and is in fact doing so with this budget. The Minister of Finance is delivering the promise. Thank you.

Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the constituents of Saskatoon River Heights in support of the budget presented by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on Thursday last.

During the 1991 election campaign and consistently since then, our party promised to restore sound fiscal management to the affairs of the people of this province, and this budget delivers on that promise. And this budget delivers on that promise with common sense, caring, and compassion.

When in late 1991 we entered the fiscal wilderness that was the legacy of the previous administration, we realized that in order to maintain the support of the people of Saskatchewan through the tough measures that would be required to restore fiscal integrity, we would need a long-term plan. We would need to consult extensively with people, listen to them, and share the development of that plan with the people who would be affected. If there were hurts, those people would have warning, so there would be no surprises. They would know what measures were being taken and why, and there would be a timetable leading to the goal of a balanced budget with regular report cards along the way.

To illustrate our government's approach, I quote the advice of Thomas H. Huxley, who said:

Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the things you have to do, when they ought to be done, whether you like it or not. It is the first lesson that ought to be learned.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we set out to do what ought to be done, not because it was or is always the popular way, but because it was the right way and continues to be the right thing to do. We abandoned the Hansel and Gretel approach to financial management of right-wing government, Mr. Speaker: leading people in circles through the fiscal forest, dropping little crumbs or sometimes bigger crumbs — depending on who was their best friend — but large crumbs or small, all leading them to the oven of the wicked witch to be burnt up in a fire-storm of debt. Instead we honed the tools necessary to blaze a trail straight through the forest, and lit a torch to help people find their way safely to the other side.

It is to the credit of the people of Saskatchewan, their resilience, their creativity, and their ever-abiding hope for the future, Mr. Speaker, that we have all come this far. And I appreciate this opportunity to thank all the people of the province who are accompanying us on this journey of renewal.

It is a credit to all of them and to their endurance that our plan is on target. In two short years we have reached beyond the halfway point towards our goal of a balanced budget. But reaching that goal is not an end in itself. Only when we reach that goal will we be able to tackle the principal of the debt. Reducing that debt will lower the amount needed to service it every year. Then and only then will we be able to use the dollars that go to pay interest now for enhancements to the programs that represent our real goal. As stated by Tommy Douglas in 1954:

The philosophy of this government is “Humanity First.” We believe that the measure of any community is the amount of social and economic security which it provides for even its humblest citizens.

And reaffirmed by our Premier, Mr. Speaker, in 1993:

I am a New Democrat because I believe in economic and social justice — in a society which seeks fairness, compassion and equity in all its affairs.

We don’t put those principles on call-waiting, Mr. Speaker, in tough times. I will have more to say about specific examples later. But meanwhile as we continue our journey, it is important that we notice and take advantage of the opportunities along the way. Ralph Waldo Emerson said:

Bad times have a scientific value. These are occasions (that) a good learner would not miss.

Thanks to the ingenuity and the cooperation of Saskatchewan people, we are discovering new ways of delivering services in Health, Education, Social

Services, and Economic Development which are community-based rather than top down. Not only is this more cost-effective, it reflects the real needs of people more accurately.

In more prosperous times, leaders at all levels may have fleeting thoughts like there must be a better way to do this, but unless pressed as we all are now, we naturally take the path of least resistance. So Emerson was right: bad times do have value, and we are all learning from them to emerge from this experience stronger and better.

Members opposite and others criticize the budget. I would remind them of the words of Benjamin Disraeli who observed how much easier it is to be critical than to be correct, especially when critics say that we the New Democrats are no different than others in our approach. Those who say that we are no different are wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Dale Eisler says in the *Leader-Post* on February 19:

But the most critical issue in government that has transformed the NDP is debt. The lack of money had ideologically disarmed the New Democrats. Without the means to intervene in the economy to achieve social and economical goals, they have been reduced to fiscal managers.

Wrong, Mr. Eisler.

The member for Kindersley said last week in this House:

Our province is steeped in tradition . . . and Tommy Douglas folklore.

Mr. Speaker, it might surprise you to know that some of us in the legislature are young enough that we didn’t even know Tommy Douglas . . . I didn’t even know the man . . .

To me he holds no special meaning . . .

For shame, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry that the member opposite did not have the opportunity to know Tommy Douglas. He is the poorer for it. For once I’m glad to be old, Mr. Speaker, old enough to have known Tommy and to be the richer for it. New Democrats are different, Mr. Speaker, we are progressive and able to face new realities squarely without abandoning our principles of hope, heart, and humility.

What do others say? Let market forces prevail. Bigger is better. On with the corporate agenda. Lower corporate taxes and give incentives and the good will trickle down. Well, Mr. Speaker, I’m tired of waiting for that first drop to land on my head. Ten years of right-wing government in this country and this province have, instead of a stream of good things raining down upon us the folks, brought about the longest drought we’ve ever had, not to mention the biggest debt.

We've had a tax on orderly marketing systems that we built. The value of craftsmanship, of artisans, have been replaced by mass production and planned obsolescence. Our environment has been ravaged. Government benevolence to large corporations has resulted in the mergers of greed. Corporate restructuring has caused untold human misery and widened the gap between the very rich and the growing numbers of poor people. Farmers and small-business people have been dispossessed by usurious interest rates. No, Mr. Speaker, that is not the New Democratic way.

That is one of the reasons that this budget supports small business with tax reductions. That is how New Democrats are different. And it supports ordinary people with many enhancements, even in tough times. New Democrats believe in shielding those least able to help themselves, like hungry children, from the forces that would prey upon them. That is how New Democrats are different, Mr. Speaker.

Most people in Saskatchewan would agree that the economic and social forces at work in the 1980s in this province have not been positive. But to reinforce Emerson's words about bad times having value, I would like to share with members, Mr. Speaker, an experience I had as a young girl growing up in north-eastern Saskatchewan.

During the winters . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, great place my fellow members say. During the winters in the small community where we lived about a mile away from, social events were held every Friday night at the schoolhouse. They were usually family events — whist drives, pie shoots, box socials, all those things that we used to do in the pre-television era.

It was the custom, since we had no power, for every family to bring a lantern or gas lamp to the school. There were rows of hooks on the ceiling where all the lamps would be hung and their collective light would be just like electric. One Friday our father was ill and not able to drive the whole family to the event, so my sister and I begged to go. It was a chinook that day so our mother relented and allowed us to brave the timber wolves and the wolverines to walk to the school by ourselves. So we went carrying our lamp and spent the evening in all kinds of frivolity and so forth.

When we entered the school it had been a very warm day. When we went to go out it turned into one of those phenomenon that happens in Saskatchewan where it was melting all day but while we were in the school in the evening the temperature plunged, a strong wind came up, and it was snowing heavily. So we decided rather than going round by the road which made it a little further, that we would cut across the field. And for some reason . . . Usually when we left the school we'd blow out the lamp but we carried it across the field with us.

As we walked further and further and got colder and

colder, I began to be afraid that we must have walked further than it would have taken to get home. We were getting quite cold and all of a sudden, the wind blew out the mantles on the lamp and it went dark.

So as we stood there in the dark, sort of refocusing our vision, we looked around and saw a tiny light, the coal oil lamp in our kitchen window; and as it transpired, that we had actually already passed our farmyard, we had missed it by a bit, and if the light hadn't gone out just then and we had gone a few more steps, we probably would have been too far away to see the light in our kitchen window. And beyond was miles of muskeg and no people living at all, so if the light hadn't gone out, I wouldn't be standing here today, Mr. Speaker.

(2145)

And the parallel I wish to draw is that whether that light is held by an individual, a government, or a corporation who gets too far off course, and when you're in that circle of light, you can't see beyond it. When the light is extinguished, as it was in this province by an election, it provides an opportunity to refocus sight and thinking, to take new bearings, and to chart a new path towards our destination.

That new trail, Mr. Speaker, is what this budget and the previous two in this province are blazing, and the lights are coming on in Saskatchewan again to shine upon social democratic values and caring compassion in the community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Teichrob: — We are different, Mr. Speaker, and here is how. I could speak all night on the extensive list of measures in this budget, but will mention just a few.

Funding for child hunger programs has been increased by more than 35 per cent. A new child benefit program to support children in low income families has been allotted \$3.8 million. Eighteen million dollars has been provided for programs that directly benefit children, including funding for child care and revised dental program targeted to the children of low income families.

We have maintained the funding for inner-city community schools and we have pilot projects, like the preschool program in La Loche and the integrated program with Health, Social Services, Education, and Justice in the West Flats in Prince Albert. There are very many worthy project, Mr. Speaker. We've done these measures to illustrate why we're different and how.

Well in Alberta, the Tory government there has halved their budget for kindergarten and preschool intervention, meaning that parents will have to pay half the cost, or those parents who are not able to will have their children denied access to those programs. Those who most need support in education and training to lift themselves out of a poverty cycle will be

denied in Alberta, while we are enhancing supports to them. That's how we're different, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to mention the New Careers program, which was a program initiated by the members opposite, but the parameters that they gave it were like a treadmill where you go off social services, work for a few weeks, get unemployment insurance, go back on social services.

We refocused it and involved the supervision of journeymen in the building trades so that those jobs are not dead-end jobs. They are supervised by journeymen and the hours worked are counted as certifiable hours towards a trade. So we turned, Mr. Speaker, without spending any more money, a treadmill into a ladder. And that is the kind of measure, Mr. Speaker, which illustrates the difference and indicates what the priorities of a New Democratic government are. For these reasons and many others, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to support this budget which has delivered our promise. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly my pleasure to rise in the House this evening and to offer my support for the budget brought in last week. And I would certainly like to commend the Finance minister and her staff for producing such a very good budget and again, a budget which saw another \$100 million cut off our operating deficit. Certainly a very fine piece of work.

Mr. Speaker, when I was campaigning for the election in '91, the debt and deficit was the most important issue with people in my constituency and many of them are seniors. And the feeling was that the seniors would tell me that they worked long and hard, they scrimped and saved through tough times to build this province and make it one of the best places in the world to live for their children and grandchildren.

And they were certainly saddened to see a province with a multibillion-dollar debt in a mere 10 years. And there was a lot of feelings of anger and despair out there among the people in rural Saskatchewan. They survived the drought of the 1930s, they survived war years, and a number of other difficult periods and times.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in just over two years we have seen our deficit decrease from over a projected billion dollars, to a deficit of under \$200 million projected for the next coming year. And this will further be decreased until we hit zero two years from now. Certainly a feat for the people of Saskatchewan to be proud of, and that we were only able to do this because of the support from the people of the province.

The former premier bragged about being able to mismanage the financial affairs of the province and still break even. And the former deputy premier, in the dying days of the government past, made the statement to the effect that we will make such a mess

here in Saskatchewan that the province will be ungovernable. Well they tried but they did not succeed.

The 1980s saw many issues. We saw the fact that many of our assets were sold or given away, basically, to friends of the government of the day. And not only did we lose the assets but we also lost the money from them. In other words we sold the farm and lost the money as well.

Members opposite remind us — or harp about — rising utility costs. Perhaps, we wonder, we should remind them why these utility costs are rising. What we have is a government in the 1980s that gave away our gas reserves. We had a government that gave away our coal reserves near Estevan. The coalfields, which SaskPower used to own, are now owned by consortiums based in the Bahamas and Panama City, with people like Peter Loughheed as a director.

Why are these utilities rising? Because we have lost control of our assets and our resources, and this was not the fault of the people of this province or this government, but by a former government set on rewarding their friends and giving away our resources. Well, the dark days of the 1980s are behind us, Mr. Speaker, but the memories and impacts will be with us for generations to come. Unlike the hardships caused by the Depression of the 1930s or the war years or drought or grasshoppers or the national trade wars, the hardship and the multibillion-dollar debt of the 1980s was Saskatchewan made — not by the people of this province, not by this government, but by the former government.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is still the number one industry in our province here, and I must say there is a new air of optimism out there. We have a variety of new crops which farmers themselves have got into. We have diversified machinery, much of it produced and built right here in Saskatchewan and designed by farmers themselves such as my neighbour, Jim Halford, with his Conserva-pak seeder.

Mr. Speaker, we saw multibillions of dollars given to farmers in the 1980s, and it proved to be merely a band-aid because next year the farmers required more. What has solved the problem on the farm is farmers helping themselves. And in doing this in the last number of years, we've seen a number of new crops such as canola and mustard and safflower and lentils and peas and others grown instead of the traditional wheat, oats, and barley.

In 1993 alone we saw a decrease of about 14 per cent of wheat acres here in Saskatchewan. And with the diversified equipment, continuous cropping, and zero till are certainly very much a part of the farming practice today. One would think with a hundred thousand or so people starving to death in the world each year that third-world and developing countries could use our wheat. And certainly this would be possible except that the powers that be decide that bombs and guns are more important than food for their people.

There's also a new feeling of optimism in rural communities. While main-streeting around the Christmas season, most small businesses reported a much better year in 1993 than in 1992. A couple of farm dealerships reported that they had been busier in the last couple of months than they had been at any other time in the last 10 years. So there is a new feeling of optimism.

Beef prices continue to remain good and I certainly salute the agriculture, beef producers, hog and poultry producers here in the province, for their determination. For this industry requires work and dedication 365 days of the year. But in the recent year or so, prices have been good and people are seeing results for their hard labour.

Health reform is another issue which certainly has been first and foremost in many people's minds in the last year or so, Mr. Speaker. And certainly the initial reaction, as might be expected, was anger and fear of the unknown and what was to come. Certainly when any community loses its hospital or at least acute-care bed funding, similarly to a school or elevator or railway service, post office, or what have you, it is a blow to the community. And naturally these people were of great concern and some were upset.

But everyone has agreed that health reform was necessary, Mr. Speaker, as we could see that the financial burden of our health care system could not go on for ever. We had to reform it, and everyone agreed something had to be done, and there were many ways of doing this. And certainly there were some loose ends that needed to be cleaned up, Mr. Speaker, after our initial round of health reform. And I'm very pleased to see, just recently, that the Rural Health Coalition — consisting of 52 communities — in the last two months have worked very diligently with the Department of Health officials in resolving some of these outstanding issues such as ambulance service and what have you, that these particular communities needed. Each community felt that they required certain little fixes here and there to make health reform more palatable for their community and certainly these people knew best what was needed in their own towns and communities. And certainly Rod MacDonald and the coalition did a very fine job as I mentioned, with the Department of Health officials in resolving some of these concerns.

The government also recognizes that health reform and health services can best be delivered and administered by local people and that's why we set up the health district boards throughout the province. And we salute those people who have dedicated many hours of work and their services to serve on these boards and help bring health reform and better health services to their communities. And these people are from all walks of life and from all political stripes.

There are a number of other issues, Mr. Speaker, that this government must continue to work on and certainly jobs which we have highlighted already are

of great concern. We must keep concentrating on them as well. There's other issues in the province, such as underground fuel tanks which we need to give more attention to, crop depredation by wildlife also is an outstanding issue.

The whole history of forestry management, another great resource, can use some more attention and direction and cooperation by all the users. Water management is of a concern. We have one arm of government preserving wetlands and we have another arm of government draining wetlands. We need to coordinate our water policy because it is a very valuable resource.

Well, Mr. Speaker, before I leave I'd certainly like to offer praise to our pioneers who did build this province and made many sacrifices in doing so, and we enjoy those benefits today from those sacrifices our forefathers made before us. I'd also like to salute the veterans of the great wars who fought for our freedom so that we may be here in the legislature today and participate in a democratic society.

We often complain about high taxes and government cut-backs and all kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, but I think when we really look at ourselves here in Saskatchewan, we are very fortunate, and I think very few of us would choose another spot in the world to live, especially outside of Canada. So, Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I participate with this government and very strongly support the budget. The sun is rising again in Saskatchewan and will soon be shining brightly, because the people see hope. And people are prepared to make sacrifices when there is hope on the horizon. Thank you very much. I move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:59 p.m.