

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act (Free Votes).

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall Wednesday next ask the government the following questions:

Regarding the Saskatchewan Energy Corporation, SaskEnergy, please provide: (1) a list of all fees and charges levied by SaskEnergy; (2) the amount of increases in each fee and charge for the last fiscal year; (3) the total revenue raised by fees and charges in the fiscal year of 1993; (4) additional revenue raised by increase in fees and charges in fiscal year 1993; (5) total revenue raised by fees and charges to date in the fiscal year 1994; (6) the projected revenue for the fees and charges in the fiscal year 1993; and (7) the projected revenue for the fees and charges in the fiscal year 1994.

I so submit.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding SaskTel, please provide: (1) a list of all fees and charges levied by SaskTel; (2) the amount of increase in each fee and charge in the last fiscal year; (3) the total revenue raised by fees and charges in the fiscal year of 1993; (4) additional revenue raised by increases in fees and charges in the fiscal year of 1993; (5) total revenue raised by fees and charges to date in the fiscal year of 1994; (6) the projected revenue for the fees and charges in the fiscal year of 1993; and (7) the projected revenue for the fees and charges in the fiscal year of 1994.

I so submit.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move that a Bill to amend The Ombudsman Act be introduced and read a first time.

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

Regarding Saskatchewan Power Corporation, please provide: a list of all fees and charges levied by SPC; the amount of increase for each fee and charge in the last fiscal year; total revenue raised by fees and charges in the fiscal

year of 1993; additional revenue raised by increase in fees and charges for the fiscal year of 1993; total revenue raised by fees and charges to date in the fiscal year of 1994; the projected revenue for fees and charges to the fiscal year of 1993; and the projected revenue for fees and charges in the fiscal year of 1994.

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

Regarding the Department of Finance, please provide: the total revenue raised by taxation, excluding corporations, in the last fiscal year; a detailed breakdown by tax of revenue raised; the projected revenue by tax for the last fiscal year; the projected revenue by tax for fiscal year of 1994; and a list of studies conducted analysing the impact these taxes have on the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, and members of the Assembly, it's an honour and a pleasure for me to introduce to you, sir, and of course through you to members of the Legislative Assembly, two very distinguished visitors to our province and our country from South Africa, Mr. Patrick Lekota and Professor Dirk du Toit.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, South Africa will hold its first non-racial democratic election for a new national assembly and nine provincial legislatures in April 1994. Some 22 million of South Africa's 40 million people will be eligible to vote, with approximately 70 per cent of these voters casting ballots, it is estimated, for the first time.

Given the constitutional and social history of South Africa and the fact that provinces are a new concept to the country, none of the candidates for leadership in the provinces has had experience in government or in the mechanics and challenges of governing. In an effort to provide a useful example of federalism in action, Canada is hosting three of nine African National Congress, ANC, candidates for premierships of South Africa's new provincial governments.

These visits are part of a familiarization program called the public service policy project, established in South Africa one year ago. The program was developed by the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in collaboration with members of South Africa's democratic movement, to help political candidates prepare for their role in a new and democratically elected system of government.

Now broadly speaking, Mr. Speaker, the objectives of the program are three-fold: one, to familiarize these candidates for political office with the issues, challenges, expectations, and constraints of

governing in a federation; two, to provide hands-on experience of the work of a provincial premier and a provincial government through briefings, readings, meetings, and in general, other opportunities to see government in action on a day-to-day basis; and three, to help the candidates assimilate their learning by linking the Canadian and South African contexts.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is very pleased to welcome Mr. Patrick Lekota, ANC candidate for premier of the Orange Free State of South Africa, and his principal secretary, Professor du Toit, as our guests.

Mr. Lekota has opposed South Africa's apartheid system of government for over 20 years, and in pursuit of his goal, unfortunately has spent many years in prison. Happily, that's behind him now and he's building a brand-new South Africa. Since 1989 he has worked to organize provincial ANC branches and is a member of the ANC national executive committee. He is also secretary to the ANC elections committee.

Perhaps, Mr. Lekota, you might just stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Travelling with Mr. Lekota, the premier candidate, is the principal secretary to Mr. Lekota, Professor du Toit. Professor du Toit is head of the department of constitutional law and philosophy of law at the University of the Orange Free State.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me a little extra time in this introduction. Let me close by saying that Saskatchewan is honoured to have been chosen as one of the participating provinces in this program. Canada, I believe, is in an excellent position to assist in the structuring and functioning of the provincial governments provided for in South Africa's new constitution, given the similarities and the contrasts between the functions and the institutions of the provinces of Canada and those in South Africa.

I believe that our government can provide Mr. Lekota and Professor du Toit with the unique perspective and insight of the workings of government through meetings with myself, other cabinet ministers, and various government officials and, dare I say, even question period today.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to welcome very warmly our very special guests from South Africa to Saskatchewan and Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed an honour for me to express welcome as well from the official opposition to Mr. Patrick Lekota from the African National Congress and those who are travelling with him. I would like to also congratulate Mr. Lekota for his being a candidate for premier of the province of the Orange Free State in South Africa's first democratic, non-racial elections.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a feat in itself, given the political climate in South Africa over the past several years. Many ANC members have been murdered and persecuted for attempting to achieve democracy, reform, and the basic right to vote.

These are things, Mr. Speaker, that we in North America have taken for granted for many decades. And I'm sure that Mr. Lekota is really pleased and counts it an honour to be able to stand and visit Canada, go back to his country and enter into the democratic process that we have achieved for years. And we congratulate you, we wish you nothing but the best, and welcome to our fair province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — I too would like to welcome Professor du Toit and Mr. Lekota to Saskatchewan and to our legislature. It is indeed a privilege to have a man in our midst who has so dedicated so much of your life to pursuing equality for people.

Mr. Lekota and Professor du Toit, I hope your visit to our province is a most fruitful one. And I would also like to wish you the very best in your bid for premier of Orange Free State.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the legislature Mr. Dennis Banda today. He's sitting in the Speaker's gallery.

Amongst other roles in life, Mr. Banda chaired our Farm Support Review Committee. And I'm sure, having chaired a committee of 32 farmers, he could also give lessons in democracy. So please welcome him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce through you and to you to members of the Legislative Assembly, a group from Gemma House in Regina. They're in the Speaker's gallery. And I'm going to meet you on the steps for a photo at 3 p.m. after you're done your tour and we'll have a little visit after that and question in the boardroom. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw your attention and that of the members to a group of six students who are seated in your gallery. These students are enrolled in the English as a second language program at the University of Regina. They're accompanied by their instructor, Ellen Gillies.

And the note that I have, Mr. Speaker, says that they're in an early stage of study in their program so I'm not sure whether everything I say is going to be well received. But if the members join with me in clapping enthusiastically, I'm sure they'll get the message.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly friends who are in your gallery today, Rod Gantefer — if you would stand, Mr. Gantefer — and his daughter, Bonnie; Wally Lockhart and his daughters, Wendy and Laura, are visiting with us this afternoon.

Mr. Gantefer owns a business in Melfort and is very active in our party as the VP (vice president) of member services. Mr. Lockhart is a business person in Saskatoon and a very energetic and active member as well.

I hope that they enjoy their tour of the legislative buildings this afternoon. Please warmly welcome our guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the Leader of the Third Party in welcoming Mr. Gantefer and his daughter to the legislature this afternoon. Mr. Gantefer is the president of the chamber of commerce, a very active group in Melfort. And I wish them well in Regina today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and to all members of the House six guests of mine today. Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, three guests from the constituency of Regina South — Barbara Schmitz, Ryan Schmitz, and Kristen Schmitz, and three constituents from my constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow, three very special constituents — Betty, David, and Stephanie Calvert.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I want to report that at least four of my guests are enjoying a school break this week and I do fully expect to be providing drinks before the day is over.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gambling Addiction

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Much has been said about democracy this afternoon and we will engage in that process now as the minister of Gaming and I enter into dialogue.

Mr. Minister, today four of your cabinet colleagues held a news conference to talk about measures that your government is taking to help families, and that is laudable. We even heard the Minister of Social Services give notice on the change to The Ombudsman Act, ostensibly to change the child

advocate. Now that is also laudable.

Your ministers talk about prevention and support for the most vulnerable families in our society, and they talked about stopping family problems before they start. Unfortunately, Mr. Minister, there was nothing in your colleagues' comments about a serious family problem that had been created in this province by your government, and that is addiction to video gambling machines.

Mr. Minister, you talk about preventing family problems, stopping them before they start. What specifically is being done to help Saskatchewan families with a family member who is addicted to your gambling machines?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To answer the member's question, let me begin by saying that when his party was the government in this province from 1982 to 1991, the amount of dollars that were spent on gambling in this province increased dramatically. The amount of dollars that were spent on bingos increased from \$4 million to well over \$100 million. And, Mr. Speaker, his government did nothing to recognize the fact that there were a number of people who were becoming . . . had a problem with gambling in bingo.

Now I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that this government put together a ministers' advisory board from health care professionals — people who have a history in dealing with people with gambling addictions — to put forth recommendations as to how we would handle an already existing problem I say, Mr. Speaker. It was nothing new. We've had casinos in this province for 25 years. The amount of dollars that were spent on break-opens and on lottery tickets and on bingos and the increase that happened under that administration, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, little was done.

We have taken the initiative to recognize that there is a necessity to put together programs and we are in the process of doing that. It's a process that will continue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, let us remain focused. Today in the *Leader-Post* there's a compelling article about gambling addiction and the fact that you have made no effort to take responsibility for this problem despite the fact that it is your government that is installing gambling machines all around this province,

In fact your government is saying that VLTs (video lottery terminal) will not cause a serious gambling addiction problem; that's what you're saying.

Mr. Minister, this article cites people who have already lost 10 and \$15,000 gambling on your machines in a period of a few weeks. It says the Saskatchewan Council on Compulsive Gambling is

now receiving 10 calls a week from people who are addicted to your VLTs. These are the people who are willing to acknowledge that they do have a problem. And the question is, how many more problem gamblers have your video gambling machines produced?

Mr. Minister, will you acknowledge that your VLTs are creating a serious addiction problem for many Saskatchewan families, and I ask you what concrete steps are you taking to deal with this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member opposite that we are not without programs in this province. There are a number of self-help groups, Gamblers Anonymous, that have established themselves, not just solely because of the video lottery terminals, but because of addictions to other forms of gambling that they may or may not have received in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health has four trained individuals in phase 1 of the national council on problem gamblers' certification program, and these are strategically located in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina. Alcohol and drug services has operated a toll free information line since 1987.

We are putting together information packages and informing the people of Saskatchewan where they might be able to receive information and where they might be able to receive help. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think we've taken a very positive approach to what can become a problem for some people who involve themselves in gambling.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you promised at the outset to establish an 800 number to help problem gamblers get counselling. Now why are you not doing that? I would suggest that it could be possibly for two reasons. Why has this not happened? Where is that 800 number? Is it because you are afraid of being overwhelmed by calls and/or because you don't really want to stop people from pumping their entire pay cheques into these machines? Which reason is it, Mr. Minister? Or is it both?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me inform the member from Rosthern that a full, detailed package will be announced next week. And I want to say in the meantime, the information line that has been in existence since 1987 is 1-800-667-7560. So if the member from Rosthern has any people — or Mr. Gribbins has any people — who contact him, they certainly can access help through this number and we would welcome anyone to feel free to call.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, I think this calls for a bit of clarification. Are you giving me the alcohol and drug number or are you giving me a specifically set-up gambling number that you have just quoted me? That's a question I want you to clarify here. Are you playing tricks here?

Mr. Minister, in today's paper there is a quote from a person who counsels problem gamblers, who says:

The end result is usually depression, divorce, bankruptcy, unemployment, and sometimes . . . a high risk of suicide.

Those are the problems that we are dealing with. And these are being caused, Mr. Minister, by your gambling machines.

Mr. Minister, if a person goes into a bar and gets too drunk, that bar owner has a legal obligation to cut him off. If a person goes into a bar and starts getting carried away on their gambling machines, you take no responsibility.

Mr. Minister, what specifically are you going to do to keep people from dropping 10 or \$15,000 into your machines? Or don't you really want to stop these people from doing that since gambling seems to be now such an important source of revenue for your government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me once again remind the member of the increases in the number of dollars that were spent in bingo under his administration when they turned a total blind eye to what the implications of that might have been. So I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the 1-800 number that I quoted earlier is there for both drug and alcohol addiction and for gaming addiction.

And as I've indicated to him, we will be announcing a detailed package of assistance and a program next week and I'm certain that the member will be satisfied that finally it's been recognized that government has a responsibility to deal with some of these issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday the official opposition tried to get some explanation and rationale behind some of the government's revenue projections. And, Madam Minister, today we want to have you discuss some of them.

You have projected an increase in individual income tax of \$40 million. At the same time your budget predicts a growth in employment of 5,000 people and I think it's an optimistic projection. If all else remains the same — if taxes remain the same as you have pledged — that means that 5,000 people would have to be taxed \$8,000 which means an average salary of approximately \$48,000. Creating 5,000 new jobs

would be quite an accomplishment, Madam Minister. Creating 5,000 new jobs paying \$48,000 a year is something even more exaggerated.

Madam Minister, where do you plan to create these 5,000 new jobs? In what sector of the economy will these jobs be created?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to answer that question. First of all, revenue estimates are based on more than just employment statistics. They're based on estimates about the growth in the economy. What we have assumed for next year is that the economy will grow by 2 per cent, GDP (gross domestic product). In fact if you look at what other external agencies are saying, our estimate is the most cautious and the most conservative.

We also have a track record in terms of predicting the growth in the economy. Last year we predicted the growth in the economy would be 2.8 per cent — members opposite criticized our projections at that time — in fact the growth in the economy was 3.5 per cent. It does not depend on the number of jobs alone that are created, it depends on the quality of jobs that are created. This government is committed to increasing not only the number of jobs created but also the quality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, your government's taxation policies over the past two years are certainly not a source of job creation. The Saskatchewan Mining Association have generated a report which determines the operating cost increases experienced by the mining industry as a direct result of your government taxes since you took office. Their report says that they are paying \$53.5 million more in taxes than they did prior to your government taking office — fifty-three and a half million dollars.

Madam Minister, the average industrial wage in this province is 25,000. That means fifty-three and a half million dollars you have taken out of the industry could have produced 2,100 new jobs.

Madam Minister, perhaps you could explain how raising taxes for small business, industry, and Saskatchewan families creates jobs? Could you tell the mining industry how jobs are your government's number one priority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to answer that question. Our view of taxes is that they have to be fair. Everybody has to pay their fair share. We make no apologies for expecting resource companies to pay their fair share. We tax their income. We also tax their assets.

But we're also willing to be flexible, and that's why we have recently announced a revised royalty structure

for the oil and gas industry which was well received by that industry and which they acknowledge will lead to increased investment in the province.

I also would like to point out, the member talks about small business and he says we've increased taxes on small business; I would like to say just the contrary has occurred in this province. We have reduced the tax on small business over a four-year period. The reduction will account . . . will be 20 per cent.

So over four years we've reduced the tax on small business by 20 per cent, and there's a very particular reason why we've done that — co-ops and small businesses create the majority of the jobs in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Well, Madam Minister, the mining association has provided a breakdown of their annualized cost, increases to their industry. It says \$13 million — nearly one-quarter of the 53 million your government has taken out of the industry — comes from as a result of utility and electrical increases and their costs. Twenty-five per cent of that are utility rates, Madam Minister. Utility rates, or perhaps more accurately, utility taxes. You did such a wonderful job of explaining how taxes create jobs, could you perhaps tell us how raising utility rates for Saskatchewan businesses and families creates jobs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I have no lessons to teach the members opposite about increasing taxes. They know that by themselves because when they were in government they increased taxes. They increased the sales tax by two points; they increased gas taxes; they added the flat tax.

Now what's key about increasing taxes is what you're doing it for. The members opposite increased taxes in order to throw the money away, to spend it. The same time they were increasing taxes they were, on average, spending more than a billion dollars a year than what they were taking in. Yes we have had to increase taxes, because we've taken a balanced approach to reducing the deficit of the province, and our taxes have been used to good end — to reduce the deficit to ensure that we can have a high quality of life for our children and our grandchildren.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sask Water Construction Project

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the minister in charge of Sask Water. Mr. Speaker, figures from the Saskatchewan Construction Association indicate that \$187,000 was wasted on construction of the Melfort to Weldon water pipeline using A K Construction, a contractor from Alberta. In December, A K Construction advised Sask Water it was going to default. It never did finish

its part of the work.

To the minister in charge of Sask Water, with all the contractors in Saskatchewan looking for work and the high unemployment in this province, why would the government consider hiring a company from Alberta, and what safeguards are now in place to investigate the financial stability and competence of competitors before tenders are awarded?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you to the member for his question and through you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, on costs, I cannot answer that at this time because the work, as you know, is not completed.

But I want to tell the member opposite that this very good project for rural Saskatchewan employed 82 people from the Melfort district. The project, when completed, will supply 9,000 households with better quality water than they had before, showing, I believe, showing our belief in rural Saskatchewan.

The member opposite talks about union and non-union contracting, and that's interesting. In 1993, Sask Water had 27 contracts that it let. Of those, 23 contracts were non-union. It's interesting also to note, Mr. Speaker, that of the 23 non-union contracts that were let, some of those non-union contracts were let . . . were sublet to unionized subcontractors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the same minister. Constituents — and constituents in your area; I'm glad you raised those people — have talked with us and they say that A K Construction left the province owing several businesses in Melfort a total of \$700,000 in unpaid bills.

To the minister, can you confirm this figure?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — To the member opposite, again I want to say I cannot comment on what the cost was because the work is not completed and I don't know the amount that he's speaking about. But I want to say to the member opposite that projects like this are good for rural Saskatchewan. This one in particular created 82 jobs — many of those local jobs, Mr. Speaker. That money was spent in the local community at the local stores for the betterment of rural Saskatchewan.

And I think the member opposite should be a lot more positive about projects like this for rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, to the minister: was a performance bond required for A K Construction, and what plan is in place to see that the affected businesses will be repaid?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to tell the member opposite that I cannot tell him what the exact cost was but I want to tell him one

more time that rural Saskatchewan wants jobs. They need jobs in the rural communities and this particular pipeline will feed 9,000 households in north-eastern Saskatchewan with a better quality of water, creating many new jobs. And these projects are seen as a benefit to rural Saskatchewan; many other communities want projects like this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being that the minister in charge doesn't have the ability to answer the question, then I place it to the Premier.

As mentioned earlier, it cost \$187,000 more to build the Melfort to Weldon portion of the water pipeline using a union contractor from Alberta. Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, did your government feel A K Construction was worth \$187,000 more to do this job and how much money was advanced to A K Construction for the project?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member raises the issue of, as they phrase it, union preferences in contracts. Mr. Speaker, what we have been seeking to do is to try to protect the construction industry from competition which is really very cutthroat.

The construction industry, Mr. Speaker, is operating at a fraction of its capacity. That is resulting in a loss of skilled tradespeople and indeed a loss of companies. What we have been seeking to do is to ensure that when public funds are used, competition does not result in cutthroat wages being paid. That's what we have been seeking to do.

Mr. Speaker, that policy continues. Unlike members opposite, Mr. Speaker, we are not attempting to involve ourselves in either discouraging or encouraging unions. I know members opposite have an irreversible streak of anti-unionism in them. That's not part of this government's approach. We have tried to be fair to all concerned and continue to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The concerns I have are over your government's policy of hiring for the water pipeline between Codette and Melfort. That portion of the pipeline was not awarded on the basis of either original open tender call or the union-only tender call.

One-half of that project was awarded to the original non-union bidder at an unknown negotiated price. The other half was undertaken by Sask Water directly hiring all union workers.

According to the Saskatchewan Construction Association and calls we've received from Melfort, the non-union contractor has completed his half of the line with less than half the number of employees and less than half the equipment than Sask Water employed on its half. In addition, the non-union contractor portion is completely pressure tested. The

Sask Water portion isn't and is showing numerous leaks.

To the minister: will you table today the comparative costs between the two separate contracts and the original budget provided in the tender?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I might point out to the member opposite and to members opposite that an attempt to work out sensible arrangements as between trades and the construction companies and the government is nothing new. That was done by the former administration in such places as the upgrader and I believe at Rafferty dam as well. That's what we were seeking to do.

I say to members opposite, your attempt to pander to the anti-unionism I think is unworthy of opposition and unworthy of a party which seeks to put itself forward as representing the new-style politics.

Mr. Speaker, that strikes me very much as old-style politics. And if anyone can tell the difference between what the Liberals stand for in this area and what the Conservatives stood for in this area, I wish they'd point it out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Tendering Policy

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Minister, last Thursday in this House you made some very serious accusations. You accused me of misleading the House with regards to the amounts of some SaskTel contracts. Mr. Minister, will you today apologize to this House for making this serious and false accusation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'm glad the member opposite asked the question because this is my first opportunity in fact to address this issue.

He is correct that in the answer that I gave him that I wasn't totally correct because I had misread one of the numbers that was before me. The member had indicated a number which I had heard him to say to be 200-and-some thousand dollars. In fact when I looked at *Hansard* that's not what he had said. And for having misheard him, I guess I'm quite happy to apologize to him for that.

But I also want to point out that although I was correct in one of the contracts that there was a spread of \$15,346, which I indicated, on another one I had indicated there was 27,000 and this is where I had misread the information; it was 127,000. But it was still within the keeping of the policy which is to try to distribute the work equitably between unionized and non-unionized contractors so that everybody has a fair and equal share of the work that's available through the Crown corporation, SaskTel; also keeping

in mind, Mr. Speaker, the importance of protecting the taxpayer and to protect the business interests of the corporation. We are doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your apology is accepted. Even though it is spread a little thinner that it should have been, I do accept it. And just for the record though I think I should point out the figures so that we have them for the people in the media that you also pointed out the other day that needed to be corrected. And so for the record, Mr. Minister, I'm going to file and table today some documentation of the figures that we present to prove our point, and I'll do that as I finish my question.

And the two Regina SaskTel contracts, Mr. Minister, awarded in November included a site-hardening contract awarded to a union contractor whose bid was \$127,049 higher than the lowest non-union bid, and a sprinkler contract awarded to a union contractor whose bid was \$15,346 higher than the lowest non-union bid. This, Minister, was a total of \$142,395 that the government spent unnecessarily. And, Mr. Minister, I think it's time that you corrected these kinds of policies for the people of Saskatchewan. And I'll table these documents now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the correction has been made. But I also want to point out to the House and to you, Mr. Speaker, that today has been a rather interesting day. Today we have seen the Conservative opposition and the Liberal opposition try to outbid each other as who is going to be the most anti-worker in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that the intent of the policy in SaskTel, as it is in the Government of Saskatchewan, is to make sure that all workers have a fair share of the work that is available because of the capital budgets of this province in the Crowns and in the government proper. That is the intent of the policies we have here. It's quite different than the policy enunciated by the member from Shaunavon earlier and the policy which has been followed by the former government and enunciated today, which would be a policy that would discriminate against unionized workers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 9 — An Act to repeal The Agriculture Development Fund Act

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to repeal The Agriculture Development Fund Act be now introduced and read a first time.

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

Bill No. 10 — An Act to amend The Vegetable and Honey Sales Act

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Vegetable and Honey Sales Act be now introduced and read a first time.

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

(1445)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Draper: — With your permission and the permission of the House, Mr. Speaker, sir, I'd like to make a short statement on Saskatchewan Heritage Day.

Leave granted.

Mr. Draper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir. I'm pleased to ask the House to join me today in celebrating Saskatchewan Heritage Day. Heritage Day celebrations have gained in popularity over the past 18 years. What began as a few local events with little publicity has grown into a recognized national day of celebration.

Here in Saskatchewan we're lucky that our heritage is so vivid. The history of the native peoples coupled with that of immigrants from many nations have all blended to create something that is very special — the basis for the place we all call home.

The Saskatchewan Architectural Heritage Society, the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society, the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society, the Museums Association of Saskatchewan, Nature Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Library Association, and the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation are just some of the organizations involved in the preservation of all that we have come to regard as uniquely our own.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I ask the House to join me in this celebration of our heritage. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize Heritage Day. Today we pay special attention to our roots, our culture, and the individuals that worked hard to build our province and our country. No matter what your heritage or when your ancestors arrived in Saskatchewan, only with courage and perseverance did they survive Saskatchewan's climate. It took great foresight for Saskatchewan's pioneers to do what they did. It took strength and vision to build up homes, farmsteads, and businesses in a land that Palliser reported to be not fit for human habitation.

In Saskatchewan we have a collection of heritages,

and this diverse collection is reflected in such celebrations as Mosaic. While it is important to recognize our diverse cultural heritage, it is also important that members of the various cultures support, promote, and further their own cultural interest without relying on the taxpayer.

We see evidence of our heritage in every town, every village, every city in Saskatchewan. Roots that we can be proud of and roots that we as individuals must ensure are preserved.

On Heritage Day we celebrate how far our province has progressed in the 89 years since becoming a province. But, Mr. Speaker, it must also be a time of reflection, a time to think about mistakes of the past and to take steps to ensure that those mistakes are not repeated.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of those who came before us, whose tireless labour has helped to build our way of life. As we celebrate Heritage Day and those who came before us, we should honour their labour by continuing our own labours today.

Our ancestors were proud of their work and we should honour them by continuing our work on this day rather than taking a holiday from work. We must continue their example, and hard work pays off. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members of the Assembly for leave to comment on Heritage Day.

Leave granted.

Mrs. Bergman: — Saskatchewan society is truly a mirror that reflects the image we present to the nation and to the world as a result of the coming together of so many diverse cultures, so many rich backgrounds. We should all pay tribute to the pioneers who built this wonderful province and reflect on what makes ours such a unique society, a true mosaic of many different ethnic backgrounds.

There was a time in Saskatchewan society when people were ostracized and punished for their differences. Today it is a credit to the people of Saskatchewan that we have developed harmony with, respect for, and curiosity about people of different backgrounds. The many festivals, celebrations, and exhibitions of art and music which have become part of our Saskatchewan tradition are a tribute to the pride we take in the ancestry of our friends and neighbours.

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, I wish to congratulate all of Saskatchewan for its contribution to heritage week and to encourage all citizens to appreciate its significance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to

ask leave from the members of the Assembly to comment on Agriculture Technology Week being held at the University of Saskatchewan.

Leave granted.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, Agriculture Technology Week begins with today's beef research field day. Many of the province's top beef producers meet with academics to discuss many facets of the industry, including branding, disease control, and pasture management.

Later in the week discussions will focus on many issues of great significance to Saskatchewan, including soil and crop research, rural sustainability, farm management, and value added processing.

Agriculture technology must play a critical role in Saskatchewan's economic future. I believe that Saskatchewan can lead the world in this exciting industry and I applaud the individuals and organizations who have recognized the potential benefits to our agriculture community and to our future economic development.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave of the Assembly to say a few words about a former member of this Assembly who was fatally injured in a traffic accident over the weekend.

Leave granted.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues. It was with a great deal of shock last night that I learned of the untimely passing of a former member of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, it is with sorrow that I rise today in recognition of a former friend and colleague, Mr. Walter Johnson.

Walter Johnson sat in this Assembly for two terms, from 1982 to 1991, representing the constituency of Saltcoats. And by all reports, Mr. Speaker, he served the people of Saltcoats well with a dedication and good nature that was his trademark.

On a personal level, I found Walter to be a quiet and unassuming member of this legislature; unassuming in public, but let me assure you that as a revered member of ag caucus, he was as vocal and voracious in pursuit of his ideals and what he thought was right as any member of caucus.

Now the effort and energy, Mr. Speaker, that Walter expended in those two terms are but a small sample in comparison to his other endeavours in the community in which he lived.

Walter was a member of the Esterhazy Legion, the Masonic Lodge, and the Wa-Wa Shrine Temple. He was a director of the Saskatchewan Livestock Association, the Tantallon Agricultural Society, and the Saskatchewan Hereford Association.

Mr. Speaker, it is a shame and so unfortunate that Walter, who was spending his retirement with his wife Dorathea, has been taken from his family and friends in such an untimely and tragic nature. He will be sorely missed.

And on behalf of caucus, I extend our sympathy to the Johnson family, and especially to Dorathea who survived this accident. And I wish her a speedy recovery and trust that she finds comfort in the arms of friends and family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the hon. member in extending to the family of Mr. Johnson our condolences and sympathy. I want to say it was with shock and some disbelief that we heard or read in the newspaper this morning of the passing of a former friend and colleague from the legislature, Mr. Walter Johnson.

Walter, as we all knew him, served with us in the House from 1982. I remember his election very clearly from the constituency of Saltcoats. We had opportunity on many occasions to sit on committees in that nine-year period, and we always found Walter to be cordial, friendly, quiet, as the member opposite mentions, unassuming.

So it's difficult for all of us to understand what happens in a circumstance like this, except to say that the passing of Mr. Johnson in a shocking traffic accident, I understand on a road between Tucson and Phoenix, an individual who was enjoying retirement with his family, only to say that, Mr. Speaker, it points out again the instance of where we as members, we as human beings, should be aware that the friendships that we share in this Assembly and throughout the province as we travel around, are very important. And I think on many occasions we may lose sight of that in the cut and thrust of this place. But really at the end of the day, friendship is much more important than other items we might debate from time to time, and we'd be wise to remember that in tempering our comments to one another.

Having said that, I do want to extend to the family, especially to Dorathea who I understand is recovering in hospital, who was also injured in the accident, we want to extend our condolences. And I'm sure other members will want to join when the formal condolence motion comes forward, but just to say we join with members of the official opposition in extending our sympathy and condolence to the family.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the government and the official opposition to express my condolences to Dorathea and the family of Walter Johnson on the tragic accident which claimed his life on February 19.

Mr. Speaker, Walter will be sadly missed and fondly remembered by all who knew him. He was an individual who took a leadership role in his community and was recognized for his contributions to many organizations, and to many provincial agricultural organizations as well, including what have been mentioned previously, the Saskatchewan Livestock Association and the Saskatchewan Hereford Association.

Walter was a very respected individual in his home community and in his constituency. It has been mentioned when he was elected, but I think he was most fondly remembered as someone who believed in the potential for Saskatchewan. His appointment as legislative secretary to the Hon. Lorne Hepworth, minister of Agriculture, in 1983, his work with the ministry of Agriculture, and his dedicated commitment to farmers through his work with Saskatchewan Crop Insurance were indicative of his intense belief in the value of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Walter Johnson was a man who provided wise counsel to me, encouraging comments and personal warmth and support that I'm going to miss. He was a friend and a man of tremendous conviction and spirit, one of the few people who provided me with support during very lonely times here.

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, I extend my sincere and heartfelt sympathy to Dorathea, his family, and to all who loved and respected this fine gentleman.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to, on behalf of the Saltcoats constituents, add my measure of condolence to the Johnson family at this time. I'd like to state that this certainly came as a shock and a surprise to the people of Saltcoats when the news was announced Saturday night and Sunday morning.

I would like to recognize Walter's contribution for the years that he spent in the Legislative Assembly as the representative of Saltcoats. He did a fine job of representing the people of the constituency and he was well regarded in that light.

On a personal note, I'd just like to mention that I ran against Walter in 1986 and he was the victor in that election and we had the very good understanding in terms of friendship as the election moved through its course. I'd also like to extend condolences to Dorathea, Mrs. Johnson, and to the members of the Johnson family, Ken and Terry, Karen, and Dawn, and their families.

I had an opportunity to teach Dawn, the youngest daughter, while she was attending high school in Esterhazy and also had the opportunity to teach Jason, one of Walter's grandsons, just before the 1991 election. As I mentioned, this came as a great shock to all the constituents and I'm sure that I would not be out

of order to, on their behalf's, extend sympathy and condolence to the Johnson family. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today and join with my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly in expressing our condolences to Dorathea and family, to say that on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party, which I have the honour of leading at this time and in this Assembly and in the province of Saskatchewan, that we were deeply honoured as a party to have a person of Walter's integrity, a person of Walter's leadership capabilities, represent us in this Assembly for those nine and a half years.

When I came into this Assembly in the spring of 1985, Walter Johnson was one of those people in my caucus that really went out of his way to make me feel welcome into this family that all legislators belong to. I think when one goes around this province and talks to people that knew Walter and worked with him, that was a universal comment about Walter Johnson.

It didn't matter if it was in the early days of starting Agribition or promoting the Hereford breed or doing the things that Walter felt so deeply about when talking about rural people in particular. The comment was that it never really mattered to Walter what your politics were, what your background was, he just wanted to work with you to improve rural Saskatchewan. And I think it truly was an honour that a person of Walter's calibre had the opportunity to serve his constituents in this Legislative Assembly. And I know all of us wish that Dorathea does have a speedy recovery because certainly her family is going to need her more than they ever did.

And on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party, we just wish that she have a speedy recovery and that the family know that we are all thinking about them at this time.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by commending the government for delivering its budget early in the year, thus allowing the many agencies who depend upon provincial revenues to plan their budgets more

accurately.

As Liberals stated in our 1991 platform document, we believe in set budget dates so that the fiscal planning of those who are funded by or affected by government budgetary decisions is more predictable. Ultimately it would be ideal for all three levels of government to coordinate their budget processes. I acknowledge that it is difficult to make provincial revenue and expenditure predictions with some of the federal factors unknown.

In this same vein, however, I would like to commend the federal government for the quick steps they have taken to revise the equalization formula and reach an agreement with Saskatchewan for the next five years. That, Mr. Speaker, will add a great deal of stability to fiscal planning in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister entitled her budget speech: *Delivering the Promise*. I want to spend some time today reviewing the many promises made by this government, in order to assess the worthiness of that title.

Of course the government has made deficit reduction a priority, but their approach has been driven entirely by taxation, both direct and indirect. While they have laid out a plan by which to budget or balance the provincial operating budget by 1996, they have based their entire success on the ability of Saskatchewan people to shoulder continual increases in taxation. The approach used by the New Democrats assumes that the income tax base will remain consistent or will grow.

The approach assumes that new labour legislation will not result in increased costs and lower profits to business. It assumes that these pressures will not cost people jobs. It assumes that consumer spending will maintain current levels or increase. It assumes that the federal government will not ask Saskatchewanians for increased tax revenues to address the federal deficit.

And the New Democrat approach to deficit reduction assumes that increases to utility rates, gambling revenues, all indirect taxation increases and offloading to third parties, this government assumes, Mr. Speaker, that none of these factors will have a negative influence on the number of people employed, on the revenue pool being generated by Saskatchewan consumers, businesses, and working people. In other words, Mr. Speaker, this budget is based on the theory that there is no limit to the amount that one can get from the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan takes issue with these assumptions. I have in fact spoken with and written to the federal Finance minister, the Hon. Paul Martin, to inform him of the current tax levels in Saskatchewan. We have discussed at length my concerns about the damaging effect that the provincial government's taxation levels have had on our fragile economy. And I have urged him to be very cautious about adding further to that burden at this time.

I realize that the federal minister faces an onerous task in cleaning up after the Conservatives, just as the NDP (New Democratic Party) have faced in Saskatchewan. But I wanted Mr. Martin to be aware of the fact that we have very few people being asked by our provincial government to reduce a huge deficit very, very quickly. Perhaps more quickly than our taxpayers are able to support.

I wanted the federal Finance minister to understand that Saskatchewan people are being given very little breathing room by the provincial New Democrats. And I explained to the federal minister that, except for the federal Liberal infrastructure program, we have had absolutely no significant job creation since the NDP came to power in 1991.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that I have done my best to present the facts to the federal Minister of Finance. At the same time, I cannot make excuses for the fact that other provinces such as New Brunswick are taking a double-barrelled approach to fighting their deficits while Saskatchewan seems stuck in the single track of attacking the deficit through taxation.

I think it is important for Saskatchewan people to recognize that as much as the Saskatchewan Liberal Party agrees that deficit reduction is necessary, we do not believe that the entire deficit can be dealt with on the backs of the taxpayer.

Now then the members opposite love to shout and catcall across the Assembly asking, what would you do? Well let me tell the government members two things. First of all, the way to create wealth and to generate prosperity is to begin with giving people the tools with which they will be able to pay taxes. These tools are the three E's — an economic development plan, education, and employment opportunities. Those are the bases of a sound economic strategy, a strategy that will empower people to contribute to deficit reduction without causing so much social pain.

Mr. Speaker, people do not object to paying taxes. Saskatchewan people recognize their obligations as citizens of this province and of this nation. What they object to is having their pockets picked over the counter, at the gas pumps, on their utility bills, and through indirect fees and charges. People object to being told that there will be no tax increases when their deficit reduction tax doubles on their income tax form.

People object to the Premier twisting statistics in his speeches about there being 3,000 more people working in Saskatchewan when Statistics Canada says there are actually 9,000 less people working in Saskatchewan than there were in 1991. People object to the Finance minister telling them there are no new taxes when their disposable income continues to shrink as the result of tax increases that were loaded into last year's budget to take effect this year.

And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan taxpayers object to

being treated as though they had a pocket for every level of government; object to the provincial government claiming no new taxes knowing full well that their decisions to offload to the municipalities will mean increased taxes at the local level.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is an effective political piece, but then that is reflective of a government that consistently puts politics ahead of governing. From a political perspective, the government has done a masterful job of loading all of the tax increases into the 1993 budget — like a time bomb waiting to explode in 1994. And now that the bomb is being detonated by this budget, people will be left wondering how a budget with no new taxes could be so hard on their pocketbooks once the municipalities have to bring down their budgets in April.

Politically speaking, they have timed the budget to ensure that whatever shortfalls there are in the provincial estimates can likely be placed at the feet of tomorrow's federal budget. And that is fine, Mr. Speaker. This is a government who spent its first two years in office blaming the previous federal and provincial governments for its own inability to create economic growth.

This NDP government will predictably spend the next two years blaming the current federal government in Ottawa. The lucky thing for the NDP is that they will never have the problem of defending a federal New Democrat government because there will never be one.

But who are the Saskatchewan people supposed to blame when it comes to their unfulfilled expectations? Who was it that promised that \$4.5 billion simply had to be enough? It was the Premier and numerous ministers over there who made that promise. The same people who applauded wildly when the Finance minister brought in her budget of \$5.03 billion last week.

Mr. Speaker, who was it that promised 2,000 new jobs to Saskatchewan people in their economic renewal plan? And who are people supposed to hold accountable for that failure, Mr. Speaker? Who was it that said that taxes are the silent killers of jobs? Could it be the Premier of Saskatchewan? And who, Mr. Speaker, who was it that promised that there were other ways to fight the deficit than by increasing taxes?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it was the same bunch over there who have since raised taxes on fuel, on alcohol, on cigarettes, on lottery licences, fishing and hunting licences, permits, utilities, income tax, and sales tax on consumer goods.

Mr. Speaker, who was it that promised to create a climate for economic development to let small business create jobs? It is the same bunch that have increased costs to businesses through labour laws and regulations resulting in lower profits and threatening the very jobs of the people they were trying to protect. The same bunch who sent shock signals through the free enterprise community by threatening to legislate

retroactive changes to legally binding contracts.

Is that what the NDP call delivering the promise? Delivering budgets that cost people jobs, delivering policy decisions and legislation that put people out of business and drive investment out of the province. Sneaking taxes in through the back door while shouting from the rooftops, no new taxes.

Is that what the NDP calls delivering the promise? Delivering an economy with 9,000 less jobs than when they started. Delivering 21,000 more people onto the welfare rolls. Is that what the NDP calls delivering the promise?

Saskatchewan people can only hope that either this government does not promise too much more or that they continue to break those promises because what they have been delivering has been too painful to bear.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk for a minute about delivering on promises. February 13 marked 100 days since the Liberal government took office in Ottawa. In just 100 days the government has kept these commitments it made to Canadians in writing: launching the national infrastructure works program which they should get down on their knees and thank them for; it helped balance . . . helped them make their projections for their deficit reduction this year; cancelling the \$5.8 billion helicopter deal; reducing the size of cabinet and cutting the PMO, Prime Minister's Office and ministerial staff; reviewing and cancelling the Pearson Airport deal; achieving major improvements with NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and negotiating a GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) deal that will hopefully increase Canada's world trade; beginning the process of replacing the goods and services tax; launching thorough reviews of foreign and defence policies; reforming the National Parole Board through appointments based on merit and expertise; allowing refugee claimants to seek work rather than forcing them onto welfare; revitalizing the Immigration and Refugee Board; opening up the budget process to broad public participation; reforming parliament to make MPs (Member of Parliament) more effective representatives of their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, that's what's been accomplished by a government that delivers on its promises after 100 days in office. Mr. Speaker, this particular provincial government has been in power now for 853 days and let's take a look at their record.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that promised they would not need more than \$4.5 billion to govern this province. Last week's budget — 5.03 billion. This is a government that spent tens of thousands of dollars mailing out little green booklets promising economic development and jobs.

Well, Mr. Speaker, after 853 days in power, what have we got to show for that expense? A bare handful of new jobs and a net loss of 9,000 working people in the province of Saskatchewan. That, Mr. Speaker, is a

shameful record.

(1515)

This is a government that claims to, and I quote, reduce “the cost of government administration at every turn.” But have they delivered on that promise?

This government boasts in the budget speech that it will save \$12 million on highway signs. But you have to read the fine print to find out that it will spend \$4 million less on maintaining our roads, while the Department of Highways and Transportation will spend \$250,000 more on planning and coordination. The Department of Highways will spend an additional \$167,000 for regulation, safety, and compliance to protect our safety on their poorly maintained roads.

Mr. Speaker, the \$200,000 saved on health stickers is a great idea and I give them full points on this. But it concerns me, Mr. Speaker, that the \$200,000 saved by an innovative idea suddenly seems eaten up by an additional \$231,000 in salaries for administration costs in the Department of Health.

Mr. Speaker, this government promised to make government more open and accountable. But what did they do when they had the opportunity to open the Board of Internal Economy when they took power?

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what they did. I guess the evidence is what it is. For two years after the NDP were elected on promises of open, honest, and accountable government, the doors of the Board of Internal Economy were kept closed by New Democrat and Conservative members — for over two years. That is the evidence, Mr. Speaker. The doors of the Board of Internal Economy remained closed in spite of the many, many opportunities there were for the members of that board to vote on opening the process to the public; despite my repeated requests for inclusion at the meetings to represent the Liberal Party.

And, Mr. Speaker, as the result of pressures from the public, this government has now agreed to appoint an independent commission to review the salaries and benefits paid to MLAs. But where was that initiative before this was open to the public, before we were allowed to participate? Where was the openness and accountability that could have been delivered at no cost whatsoever? Where was that commitment over two years ago?

And while we're on the topic of wages and salaries, let me say this, Mr. Speaker. While the government has no hesitation to unilaterally raise salaries and add more staff to its departments under the guise of “cutting administration costs at every turn,” they cannot seem to get over the fact that the Liberals are now officially entitled to the money set aside for a third party by virtue of The Legislative Assembly Act.

It is interesting to listen to the members opposite grandstanding about my “wage” as Leader of the Third Party. Something for which I did not qualify until we

achieved official party status in complete adherence with criteria laid out by this very Assembly and those very members.

May I take this opportunity to remind the members opposite that it was they, not the Liberals, who set these criteria. And it seems odd that they are now having so much trouble accepting the fact that we have met the criteria and qualify for the additional resources they were responsible for assigning to a third party.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting indeed to note that it was the former member for Regina North West who resigned months after declaring his decision to seek the federal nomination, even though he remained on full MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) salary and expenses in the interim. It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that it was Mr. Solomon who approached me to lobby for support for official party status for none other than the New Democratic Party of Canada at the federal level.

Obviously Mr. Solomon and the New Democratic Party have different ideas about meeting criteria at the federal level than they have about the third party provincially. Obviously Mr. Solomon feels that the Leader of the federal NDP and the members should have some mercy shown towards them. But I have a hard time mustering sympathy for their situation, given the incredible immaturity being shown by members opposite about the third party status we have legitimately achieved in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this fair and open and honest government talks about providing audited financial reports for every Crown corporation, every agency, board, and commission. May I suggest to the Finance minister that it would be far more effective to have the revenue expense and retained earnings statements of the Crowns. It would be far more effective to provide that in the form of an appendix to the annual budget so that we could have a truly accurate picture of the financial status of the Crowns relative to the dividends paid by CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) in the annual budget.

There have been considerable improvements, granted, as the result of some of the Gass Commission recommendations that have been implemented. However there are still a great many apples-and-oranges comparisons that have to be made between financial documents to get an accurate picture. It certainly does not make the cross-references easier for people, Mr. Speaker.

It doesn't make it easier for people to understand when there is only a one-line item in the budget on Crown Investments. The Crown corporations and agencies and boards and commissions constitute a major component of the fiscal picture in Saskatchewan. If the true intention of government is to reduce confusion about our financial realities then it makes sense for the government to be including more than a one-line item about Crown dividends in the provincial budget. The idea of a summary statement is

to give a total picture, but negligible information included in the budget on the Crowns appears purposely set so that it cannot be properly analysed.

I would suggest to the Minister of Finance that future budgets include a detailed summary of the Crown corporations' financial statements complete with previous years' figures, estimates, and projected revenues and expenses, just as is done with other departments. Only then will we complete the achievement of what the government claims to have now and that is, quote: one of the most useful financial statements issued by a senior government in Canada, end of quote.

I should like to remind the government that this is not all that the Provincial Auditor said in his report. About Crown corporations, he recommended among other things, and I quote from page 289, appendix V, section 6.5:

All dividends declared by Crown corporations and similar government owned entities and all dividends which the Province receives from a joint venture in which it is a shareholder should be paid directly into the Consolidated Fund.

That recommendation would have ensured at the very least a more accurate picture of the profitability of the Crowns to be included in this budget. The government, for some reason, objected to this and I quote again the auditor's report:

The Government appears to disagree with the central notion of the (Gass) Commission that CIC should not be permitted to expend . . . excess earnings of Crown corporations without the specific approval of the Legislature.

The Government has indicated it views CIC as the holding company for the Crown's investments.

It considers it appropriate that the other returns from investment flow to CIC rather than to the Consolidated Fund.

I suggest that until there is a more accurate picture of Crown activity included in the budget, we will not have achieved that "most useful document" that the Finance minister refers to.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister talked at some length about, and I quote again: identifying the risks in the balanced budget plan. It is interesting that the minister seems so concerned about the potential for the federal government to offload onto the province; at the same time, however, in her 1993 budget offloads more cuts onto the municipal government for 1994, more cuts to education and acute health care funding — all under the warm and fuzzy term, partnership.

While the budget speech contains graphs and statements about what a 5 per cent reduction in federal spending could mean to the province, there

are no charts or graphs or impact studies to show what the offloading from the government to the municipalities has already meant to local communities in terms of property tax increases, program cuts and lay-offs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this back-door budget claims to set a priority on jobs. But how can this be so? How can a government which has imposed the highest provincial taxes of any government in Canada, has made Saskatchewan people amongst the highest taxed people on the North American continent — how can this government claim to make jobs a priority? And where is the evidence of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Is it in the list of companies that have laid off workers since the government was elected? Is it in the list of the 700 companies that we were told might want to locate here but haven't shown up yet? Is it in the 9,000 less jobs, less people working in our workforce since 1991? Is the evidence in the 21,000 more people on welfare? Where is the evidence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government places a priority on job creation.

This government had a chance to create jobs by joining the federal infrastructure program. And what did they do after tripping over themselves to try to be the first in line to sign up? What they did, Mr. Speaker, was to cop out. They stuck their fingers into the federal funding pot, took out \$17 million of the money which could have been available to municipalities.

Did they put up their share to get things moving at the local level? No, Mr. Speaker, this government which supposedly makes jobs a priority didn't do that. What they did was to change the wrapping paper on some capital funds that were already designated, and they called that their share of the infrastructure program. Even when there were 50-cent dollars on the table, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the provincial government jumped in to grab some federal funds to supplement its own capital plans. They did not fund new initiatives at all, but added federal money to pay for part of capital projects already scheduled. They jumped in and took some money off the table that municipalities could have put to work at the local level.

Furthermore, they put almost nothing into matching the expenditures except for advancing funds on projects that cash-strapped municipalities were able to finance. This is a government that claims to be delivering the promise of job creation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make it clear that Liberals see economic growth as the key to deficit reduction, not unreasonable levels of taxation. And that, I want to make clear to the members opposite, is the key difference in philosophy between the Liberals and the New Democrats. Liberals believe, Mr. Speaker — and perhaps they should pay some heed — in the empowerment of the individual to enable him or her to contribute to the collective. New Democrats believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is the job of the collective to look after the individual.

And I want to explain today that individuals in Saskatchewan want the opportunity to look after themselves. They're willing to work and study and train to improve themselves, but they need to have that opportunity, an opportunity which this government in their Speech from the Throne and their budget does not provide. There is nothing of substance in this budget to empower the individual, to give the men and women of Saskatchewan a chance to improve their lot in life.

There is nothing in this budget that gives the students and teachers in our province a reason to believe that education is a priority for this government. It is not possible to believe that, because the government has once again cut funding to education at a time when business and industry is telling us that education is the key to a skilled workforce.

It is not possible to tell this New Democratic government is committed to jobs when it cuts funding to New Careers Corporation. That's right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At a time when a government supposedly committed to jobs should be announcing changes and improvements to better training and retraining opportunities, this is the government that cuts back in this area.

While this government claims its commitment to primary and post-secondary education, the evidence shows that the priorities are askew in this area as well. This year's budget shows an increase in the cost of department administration, albeit just \$102,000. But it is an increase at the top, while K to 12 education and post-secondary education and skill training are reduced.

I ask how a government can justify increasing funding for its own department while field level cuts are the order of the day. The message is that this government expects to have more funding to deliver less service, while it expects everyone else to do less with more. And that is not only unfair; it is unexcusable.

There is nothing in this budget to give our rural residents — our farm families and citizens in our smaller rural communities — any hope for the future. Where is the rural economic development plan, the funding for programs to develop industry and markets in rural Saskatchewan? Where is it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has shown an embarrassing lack of interest in agriculture. In fact there has been very little understanding shown towards the difficulty faced by rural Saskatchewan in general. After two and a half years, this is the government that is still trying to develop an agriculture plan, and I am concerned that the entire fiscal strategy of the New Democratic government is driven more by its obsession with power and an underlying desire for re-election than it is by a sound economic plan.

(1530)

There are some promises to develop a farm safety net

program. But let's get real; this government has shown no serious intent to do so for the last two years, and farmers have absolutely lost faith in this administration.

The promise to improve crop insurance will surely come with a price tag, and the details of just how much whole farm premiums will cost do not even appear in the budget. With so many farmers having dropped out of crop insurance due to its unaffordability, we'll be watching very closely to see if government moves to reduce the exposure of farmers with this initiative. The meagre \$20 million which will be invested over four years to develop new markets and new jobs contains no details and is being watched with scepticism by farmers to see if there is a real strategic plan attached which will create measurable results.

The obvious neglect of rural Saskatchewan leads one to believe that this administration has written off its electoral hopes in rural Saskatchewan. This clearly explains their willingness to watch the rural economy and infrastructure being dismantled under their very noses.

Instead of working to enhance rural economic development, the government has chosen to create a central vacuum of indirect taxation by plugging video lottery terminals into every small community, hoping to suck millions of dollars from Saskatchewan communities into the government treasury.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is a government which has chosen to prey on the weaknesses of people, to prey on their desperate need for a lucky break. This government has chosen to attack the limited disposable income of vulnerable people just to meet its political objectives. I wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what Tommy Douglas would think about that.

And who are those vulnerable people, the people this government claims it has to protect in difficult times? Who are the people who will be sitting in front of the video lottery terminals helping the government to balance its books at the expense of their families and creditors? Who'll be risking the hundreds of millions of dollars required to generate the profits the government wants to get? Will it be the wealthy, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Will it be the upper income earners, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Will it be the well-educated and the business leaders and the politicians of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Not likely.

Present trends show that it is ordinary people, people who are already supportive of other gambling opportunities in Saskatchewan, who will be drawn to these devices. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister of Gaming says he intends to draw tourists to Saskatchewan, to stop the flow of gaming dollars out of the province of Saskatchewan? Well I have news for the minister of Gaming, who should do his homework.

Manitoba already has huge numbers of video lottery terminals — two 100,000-square-foot entertainment

centres in Winnipeg, brimming over with VLTs and bingo. Alberta, Mr. Minister, has had video lottery terminals for two years. Montana has slot machines. North Dakota is right next door to Minnesota, which has slot machines, and North Dakota has casinos on its reserves, as does Minnesota.

So I ask you this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. From where exactly does the minister expect these tourists will be coming to pay 9 per cent provincial sales tax and 55 cents per litre for gasoline? And has the minister taken note of the studies from numerous other jurisdictions which support the statement that the more gaming offered in a particular state or province, the greater the number of trips to places like Las Vegas and Atlantic City from those areas?

The Minister of Finance and the minister of Gaming know full well that increased proliferation of gaming simply whets the appetites of those who can afford to go to the city of lights, while the poor must stay home, content to gamble their money against the government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the provincial government tells us that this so-called gaming strategy is directed at rural hotels and that future multimillion dollar casinos are in support of the aboriginal population. I challenge the minister to show how this strategy will benefit the small towns who are sending tens of thousands of dollars per month to the government — money which can no longer be spent in their struggling economies, money which will no longer find its way into charitable coffers of local fund raisers.

And I challenge the minister to show how the draining of millions of dollars in disposable income annually from the Saskatchewan economy, particularly from lower income groups, how this will benefit the aboriginal population by creating a handful of jobs as casino workers.

I challenge the minister to show the local charitable groups will not have their revenues eroded, that the exhibition boards in Regina and Saskatoon will earn more from the proposed casinos than they do now from the existing format.

And I challenge the minister to prove that bingo revenues and horse-racing betting will not be diminished as the result of the new gaming focus on video lotteries and casino gaming.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I challenge the minister to show how much revenue will be needed from Saskatchewan people to produce the profits and offset the damage this will surely do on many social and economic levels.

The economic development strategy of this government is nothing short of shameful. Two and a half years of opportunity have been wasted while the government tried to convince us that it had a strategy, a plan for economic development. Now two and a half years later they have finally admitted that their job creation predictions were unfounded and that their

plan has failed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, hope is not a strategy. Wishful thinking is not a plan. It concerns me deeply that it has taken two and a half years to put together a strategy for the North. What is more disturbing is to hear that, I quote from this budget: "Northern people will be directly involved in the planning and priority setting."

Why has it taken so long to set this priority? I find it interesting to listen to comments by an aboriginal leader who says that communities will be pitted one against another in making these decisions. He feels that it is unfortunate that the focus of these discussions will be on the means rather than the ends.

I believe that aboriginal people want, deserve, and are capable of more than just a piece of the gambling action. And I believe that we must have a stronger commitment towards improved justice, education, and economic development if aboriginal peoples are to take their rightful place as equals in this society.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the way to achieve this is not to replace the guns and whisky of the 1800s with the video lottery terminals and card games of the 1990s. I do not believe that the majority of native people support this approach and I believe that first nations people are worthy of a better future.

This government has talked for almost three years about its commitment to children and to the family, yet the evidence of that commitment has been minimal. I believe that the government's slot machine solution to deficit reduction will do more to damage the family unit in Saskatchewan than any other initiative to date in this province's history.

For a party that complained bitterly when it was in opposition about the lack of attention to the poor and the children of our province, it is inexplicable why it should take so long to act on the establishment of the Children's Advocate, talked more than two years ago in this very Chamber. And when was it announced? It's disgraceful.

I want to point out that I took the time to track down the information on a proposal from Manitoba on a Children's Advocate on a similar focus more than two years ago. The Minister of Social Services was wondering why I don't rush off to write copious notes to the Department of Social Services any more. Check into the history perhaps and see how much information I have sent there, none of which had been acknowledged at all.

For me, that was a test. The test with the Manitoba information was a test to see what this government does with information that's been offered up as part of their input. The length of time they have taken to act and the fact that there was no consultation has given me serious misgivings about providing a great deal of time and energy and effort into input with these people in government.

I realize that this government would love to have

constant input from this side of the House, but it has become obvious that input does not equal output where the government is concerned. Like many Saskatchewan Liberals, our caucus may choose to send our ideas elsewhere — to Ottawa, to other provinces — or wait until we are in a position to implement them ourselves.

Speaking of input, the most interesting claim in the budget is the government's statement that:

... wellness reforms are based on the concept of community decision making. Local people are best equipped to make choices for their communities.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously the writer of the Finance minister's speech has not been watching carefully as the Rural Health Coalition had to practically drag the Department of Health kicking and screaming to the table under the threat of a lawsuit to make this government aware that local communities do know what is best for them, a fact that the department approach has failed to acknowledge from day one of the wellness model implementation.

This budget plays a shell game with rural health care by promising an additional \$10 million for the rural health initiatives fund. Now I will say that again for those who want to look it up — the rural health initiatives fund, \$10 million.

The fact is, there is no detail provided as to what this fund will do. The reality, however, seems to be that a 2 mill levy which was previously collected by the cities in which there were union hospitals will now be collected province-wide by the provincial government.

What this really means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there is less money available at local levels and more control of it by the province. In actuality, while the government is saying that there will be a 1.6 per cent increase in health care funding, there will actually be a loss of \$10 million in acute care funding as the funding is cut by 2.8 per cent as the result of last year's budget.

The increase of \$4 million more for home care and \$4 million to long-term care will not be sufficient, given the number of acute care beds currently being taken up by level 4 patients. When those acute care beds are cut, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people are going to be displaced and the funding for home care and long-term care will not be adequate by any means to cover it off.

(1545)

Currently what is happening is that beds are closing and that we have a large number of level 4 patients blocking acute care beds. This shell game will simply result in a greater crisis in acute care as the funding becomes more and more inadequate. The budget talks of the savings amassed by the Saskatoon Health Board in the magnitude of \$7 million. What it fails to

mention, Mr. Speaker, it fails to mention that the board is operating at a massive deficit and how the department plans to address the issue of deficits at the local level.

There are commendable initiatives in the nutrition and breast cancer screening programs, but I will raise issues with this government about areas in which far more could be done to prevent illness.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, this budget is indicative of why NDP governments are becoming an endangered species across Canada — extinct in Alberta; on the endangered list federally; and hunted by the electorate in Ontario, British Columbia, and soon Saskatchewan. The NDP are proving to be incapable of evolving to be a government of the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier went on at some length in this Assembly to remind us of the glory days of the NDP-CCF (New Democratic Party-Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) but he does not give an accurate account of history. Looking back to postwar years, the Premier would have the people believe that Tommy Douglas was the only fiscal wizard of unparalleled talent in the nation.

When we look at the 10 years ... pardon me, let's just take 5 here. Let's go from 1951 to 1956, for instance. The Liberal Government of Canada started with a total GDP of \$21.64 billion. The national debt was 17.58 billion for a debt:GDP ratio of 81 per cent.

By 1956 that ratio had dropped significantly and it was around 61 per cent. The Liberals oversaw an economy with a GDP of \$32.058 billion, with a debt of 19.815 billion.

In other words in just five short years, they succeeded in reducing the debt:GDP ratio significantly and they were aided in this by an economy of the times, which was being experienced across the nation, that grew by 48 per cent in five years.

Now at the same time they were successfully reducing the debt:GDP ratio, guess what they were doing while they were reducing that, Mr. Speaker? They were increasing the transfer payments to the provinces including Saskatchewan. In fact transfers virtually doubled from \$257 million in 1951 to \$507 million in 1956. These transfers made it much easier for the provinces to meet their financial obligations. This in turn meant that the provinces should have had a much easier time controlling their debts, if not reducing them overall, Mr. Speaker.

Now curiously enough, let's look at what the books tell us about that particular time in the province of Saskatchewan under the previous CCF-NDP. Even though Saskatchewan was benefiting from transfers that were almost doubling in size, its debt grew by 2 per cent — from 12.5 per cent to 14.5 per cent — while the federal government's debt as a percentage of gross domestic product fell by 20 per cent.

So who were the better managers of money, Mr.

Speaker? The federal Liberals who were doling out more money to the provinces in transfers and taking care of onerous programs such as defence while the Korean War was on, new social programs like unemployment insurance and many veterans' pensions? Or the Saskatchewan CCF under whom the debt actually increased even though they were receiving more federal money and an economy which grew by 29 per cent over five years?

T.C. Douglas was a good manager, but certainly no better than many others of his era. When the economy was growing as it was and the federal transfer payments increased as dramatically as they did, Mr. Speaker, there is no reason why they should increase their debt as a percentage of the GDP.

While we were looking back at history, it is interesting to note a comparison between the Thatcher government in Saskatchewan and the Conservative government of Manitoba at the same time. Between 1962 and 1971 Manitoba and Saskatchewan had economies of almost identical size. Saskatchewan's economy was 4.2 per cent of the national average and Manitoba's was 4.3 per cent. Saskatchewan had an 8 per cent average annual rate of growth compared to 7.9 per cent average annual rate of growth in Manitoba.

In 1964, the year Ross Thatcher took power, Saskatchewan began to outperform its eastern neighbour that was under the administration of the Conservatives. The fact that Saskatchewan's accumulated debt — equal to that of Manitoba in 1967-68 — fell to \$904 million while Manitoba's went from \$914 million to 1,696 million for the same period, says a great deal for the tight fiscal management of the Thatcher years.

But, Mr. Speaker, in spite of whatever light we may want to cast on the history of our respective political parties, today is today and the future is coming. I regret, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a government that is providing us with the necessary leadership for the future. This budget is not about creating activity and enthusiasm. It is not about enticing investment from the huge reserve of savings in the province of Saskatchewan. It is not a budget about getting in on the ground floor for an economic recovery. This budget is not a tool with which the government can guide and craft the economic growth in our province. It is simply a level — a level which stays the course of deficit reduction without providing the slightest incentive or encouragement to forge ahead into a new era of economic success.

Mr. Speaker, this budget — like the government which produced it — lacks the vision necessary to inspire job creation and the economic recovery in which Saskatchewan business and Saskatchewan workers are ready to participate. With creative leadership and an innovative approach to the budget process we could be recovery bound. However this particular administration, in its single-minded, taxation-only approach, may have missed the golden opportunity people have been trying — through

sacrifice — to create.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot endorse this budget as a part of a sound, economic recovery plan for the province of Saskatchewan. I suggest that its priorities are misplaced and it lacks the creativity to generate the economic growth upon which its estimates rely. If the growth referred to by the Minister of Finance really existed, if there really were the economic recovery taking place that she suggests, then it would be reflected by a growth in taxation revenues. I suggest that the levels of taxation imposed by this government have driven large portions of our economy underground. I suggest that they will not resurface until there is renewed confidence in the political leadership of this province.

Therefore, since the growth these estimates are based upon is clearly not there, I suggest that this budget will not hold the line on deficit reduction. This deficit reduction however . . . Pardon me; it will hold the line of deficit reduction but it will come at the expense at whatever economic recovery may have been trying to emerge in the province of Saskatchewan.

Therefore, because of its lack of encouragement for the economy, I will not be supporting the motion to approve the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House today and to respond to and to provide my wholehearted support for this government's priorities as expressed in the budget speech.

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a special hello again this year to the residents of Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain who continue to give me support and encouragement, and I appreciate that very much.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend, unlike the previous speaker . . . And I see she's leaving. I'd like if she could stay and listen . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I think the member knows that he may not refer to people either being present or leaving the Chamber, and I ask the member to please refrain from that.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I commend the Minister of Finance, the Premier, the cabinet and my caucus colleagues, and the citizens especially of Saskatchewan for their ideas and their commitment to rebuild this beautiful province from the devastation of the 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, I might say that the previous speaker, the third party leader, quoted Tommy Douglas two or three times. I would like to quote Tommy Douglas, Mr. Speaker And in some ways I find it interesting that she would quote Tommy Douglas because Tommy Douglas spent his whole life fighting Liberals, because he didn't stand for what Liberals stand for. So I find it

interesting that the Liberal leader is quoting Tommy Douglas, because he would fundamentally oppose their positions today as he did years ago.

Mr. Speaker, in 1954 this is what Tommy Douglas said, and I quote. He said:

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.

Tommy Douglas, 1954.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote what our Premier said in 1993, almost 40 years later. And I quote:

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.

Premier of Saskatchewan, 1993, almost 40 years later, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, from 1954 to 1994, we have new challenges and new realities, but the fundamental commitment of this movement, this party, remains the same, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to be associated with the comments from Mr. Douglas of '54 and our Premier of 1993. And that commitment is reflected in this budget, Mr. Speaker. This budget does reflect compassion, equity in government affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I find that different from the view we saw today in question period where both parties were jumping up to beat up on working people. Mr. Speaker, you have never heard either one of those parties, including the member who crossed the floor, speak about social justice and equity. You've never heard that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader is so concerned about the precarious position of the Saskatchewan financial situation. Let me read what Mr. Carmichael, the senior . . . Ted Carmichael, the senior economist for Burns Fry said about last week's budget. And I quote:

The Romanow government is developing an excellent track record in reducing the enormous deficit it inherited . . . We expect the government to continue to hit its target and therefore view the provincial credit rating outlook as very positive.

Now why on earth would a third party leader, who as a leader, be feeding into cynicism and be so negative when we got external people saying that we're on the right track and trying to be positive about it, Mr. Speaker?

So I think the Saskatchewan public would likely pay more attention to Mr. Carmichael on the health of Saskatchewan's finances than the Liberal leader, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, just on the Liberal leader's comments for a moment, that in my six years in this Chamber I have never heard such a self-righteous speech as we heard today, Mr. Speaker — self-righteous and full of rhetoric, but didn't really say anything. Mr. Speaker, she didn't talk about the budget. That's last year's speech she was using; she didn't even talk about the budget.

She criticizes the government for making some assumptions about developing its budget. I assume Mr. Martin is making some assumptions about developing his federal budget. That's what you do when you're in government, Mr. Speaker. You consult and you make your best judgements about the indicators. You can't develop a budget any other way. And Mr. Martin in Ottawa is likely doing the same thing, Mr. Speaker.

(1600)

An Hon. Member: — We hope he is.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well we hope that he is, as my colleagues say.

Mr. Speaker, you can't pick numbers out of the air and put a budget together. Is that her solution?

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader talks about the taxation levels in Saskatchewan. I mean this is really, really funny. Because I have an analysis here, Mr. Speaker, where she's talking about taxes provincially and her concern about Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of taxation levels for families below \$25,000, which are a concern of ours, families with that low of income, Mr. Speaker, the provinces with the highest combined taxation levels for families below \$25,000, Mr. Speaker, are all Liberal provinces. Mr. Speaker, they're all Liberal provinces. And then when you add Quebec into that, that's another Liberal province that's taxed higher than Saskatchewan. For families below \$25,000, Mr. Speaker, we're the third lowest. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal provinces on the top seven have four, four provinces, Mr. Speaker.

Now the Liberal leader said during the North West by-election that she was going to adopt the McKenna model. Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. McKenna has got the second highest tax rate of any province in Canada. For a family below 25,000 the McKenna model has an 11 per cent sales tax, Mr. Speaker. The McKenna model has a combined tax rate of \$1,000 more per family less than \$25,000 than Saskatchewan. Now if she's going to adopt the McKenna model, we know what she would do in government if she were here, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you move along the scale up to \$75,000, yes the Saskatchewan tax rate is much higher; in fact we're the fourth highest. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal provinces come down because they're not concerned about taxing high income people. So, Mr.

Speaker, we don't apologize for taxing high income people at a greater rate.

And we'll see what her federal counterparts do in terms of taxing high income people and then we'll have a kind of a fair test here.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate that the Liberal leader needs to do her homework when she starts expressing concern about Saskatchewan taxation relative to her own Liberal provinces. Because that's the best indicator as to how she would operate if she were in government.

I would like to make a couple of other points, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Liberal leader's speech. I could go on and on because it's so full of rhetoric. But, Mr. Speaker, she says that . . . Well, maybe I'll just add a couple of other things here, a couple of other quotes of the Liberal leader's, with regard to taxes because I think these are important.

Mr. Speaker, this is the same person who wants to . . . who said back in 1990 that Saskatchewan should set up its own Senate. Well presumably that would cost us some money, Mr. Speaker, setting up our own Senate.

This is the same Liberal leader, Mr. Speaker . . . And this is why Saskatchewan people have to be very careful and look very carefully at what she's saying. On December 1, 1990 in the *Leader-Post*, she said — this is in regard to building and taxation fairness — she says, and I quote: I “personally favoured extending the goods and services tax to food.”

That's in the *Leader-Post*. The Liberal leader — my colleagues can't believe this — she said December 1, 1990 in the *Leader-Post*: I “personally favoured extending the goods and services tax to food.” Well, Mr. Speaker, that certainly isn't someone who sounded like she was concerned about taxation today.

Mr. Speaker, on October 2, 1992, this is what the Liberal leader said in the *Star-Phoenix*, and I quote: “Health premiums based on income would be implemented by the Liberal government.” She wants health care premiums now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, of course we know where they're coming from on health care premiums. Their record is pretty clear in that area.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make another point here with regard to the Liberal leader's concern about us raising her 37 per cent salary increase. Now, Mr. Speaker, she can squirm all she wants, Mr. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is, two secretaries get reclassified, two women secretaries get reclassified, and they get a 4 per cent salary increase. Any way you cut it, Mr. Speaker, whether it's a reclassification or the addition of another member, that is a pay increase. The bottom line is she got a pay increase of 37 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, she can't have her cake and eat it too. Mr. Speaker, she's wanting two sets of rules — one for her, where she gets a 37 per cent increase, and one for a secretary in Executive Council, a single parent in one case, who gets a 4 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, if this is the new politics, we don't want any part of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Another point I'd like to raise, Mr. Speaker, is that the Liberal leader I presume was responding to my comment in question period the other day when she says that the reason she didn't meet with me when I extended the invitation to her three months ago is because in her experience Social Services don't respond to her letters. Mr. Speaker, I would like her to prove that. I would like her to prove that because I don't think that's an accurate reflection of the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I met with her . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the member says our department isn't telling the truth. I take that as a deep offence, as a deep offence, Mr. Speaker. They're not here to defend themselves, and I take that as a deep, deep offence.

Mr. Speaker, I initiated a meeting with the Liberal leader a month after I was appointed as Minister of Social Services. We had just finished a cabinet retreat and we agreed to a strategic plan for Social Services, Mr. Speaker. It had gone through the department as well.

I sat down with her. We spent two hours talking. I didn't want to waste my time any more than she did. If this was a waste of time, then she should have told me that. I left her with a copy of that plan. I invited her feedback, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I went and invited her critic to sit down with me to be briefed and go over our plans, including our proposed Bills. And Mr. Speaker, the next thing I know is they get up and ask me a question in question period.

And now she says that she didn't come back to me because in her experience providing input and ideas and writing letters to Social Services doesn't result in anything. And I find that offensive, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing I'll respond to in the Liberal leader's remarks . . . because she clearly didn't read the budget, Mr. Speaker, but I think there's a couple of points I need to clarify. She says that . . . she quoted the Premier as saying when he was in opposition he said he could run the government on \$4.5 billion, and he's not doing it.

Mr. Speaker, this proves that she did not read the budget. Because, Mr. Speaker, the government is being run right now on 4.187 or \$4.2 billion. It is being run on a lot less than 4.5 — 842 million of that is interest, Mr. Speaker, from her friends over there. So the Premier is doing better than she realizes, Mr. Speaker, and I commend him for that. I commend the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, she also quotes the Provincial Auditor out of context in many ways. The Provincial Auditor is very satisfied on balance about most of the accounting by the provincial government and says in fact something to the effect that — I don't have the direct quote in front of me but I did the other day — that basically we're about the most accountable government in Canada at the current time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with regard to job creation, is the Liberal leader saying that she does not support the 600 new mining jobs held by . . . 47 per cent of those held by northern people in the North? Does she not support the development of those 600 jobs? Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting for her ideas — one idea a week. We're still waiting.

Mr. Speaker, she gave us no ideas around job creation today, so she doesn't have any solutions. She even criticized us for being one of the first provinces to develop an infrastructure program with the federal government. So we can't win, Mr. Speaker. She criticizes us when we don't create jobs and then she criticizes us when we do, Mr. Speaker.

What I would suggest to the Liberal leader is that she read the Conference Board of Canada's projections for Saskatchewan. Don't listen to our ideas. Read the Conference Board of Canada in terms of economic development prospects in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're recommending . . . they're suggesting that there will be a significant increase.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleading with the Liberal leader, who's from my home community, to join the chamber of commerce in Saskatoon and be optimistic about 1994, Mr. Speaker, to talk to home-based business people who are optimistic about 1994. Mr. Speaker, rather than being cynical, I suggest that she has a responsibility to be optimistic and positive. She owes that to the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, now I'll move to the main comments in my text, Mr. Speaker. And I would start out by saying, Mr. Speaker, that changes are occurring at a very rapid pace. New realities are confronting us on a daily basis; issues are increasingly complex. And, Mr. Speaker, simplistic solutions and quick fixes like we heard today are not the way to go, Mr. Speaker. The solutions are not easy for any government in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the budget speech made it clear that this government is prepared to continue addressing our major challenges, just as we did in the previous budgets. Facing and meeting challenges and creating opportunities together is the essence of what we call the Saskatchewan spirit. This government has demonstrated that it is prepared to provide the leadership necessary to move Saskatchewan forward. This is being done with vision, plans, and actions which are developed in concert with, Mr. Speaker, the people of the province and being done in a

coordinated and integrated fashion.

Some might say that positive change and renewal are impossible under our current conditions. We say that problems should be viewed as opportunities from which we learn — growth and progress. And we are doing this, Mr. Speaker, through consultation and partnerships with people and with communities. We are working together, Mr. Speaker, with the people of Saskatchewan.

The challenges have not been easy. Some decisions have been heart-rending, but we must position ourselves and our children, Mr. Speaker, for the new realities of tomorrow. This has required new thinking and new mind sets for all of us because tomorrow will be significantly different than today, and we all know this, Mr. Speaker.

We also recognize that change is worrisome; change is uncertain. And we all feel a bit uncertain, which is all the more reason why we should work together. This year has been designated as International Year of the Family by the United Nations.

Two of the principles underlining this special year are, one, that the family constitutes the basic unit of society and thereby warrants special attention; and two, that families assume diverse forms and functions within each national society and these express the diversity of individual preferences and societal conditions.

The people of Saskatchewan recognize these principles, Mr. Speaker, because our own values are reflected there. We believe that the family is important and that its welfare is crucial. The International Year of the Family provides an opportunity for everyone to stop and to think about and to appreciate the important role of families and the important role of recognizing the various kinds of families in society.

The Government of Saskatchewan also recognizes and accepts these principles. It has been working very hard to focus more effectively on the needs of families and children. Working effectively means working in cooperation. We have agreed that planning and decisions about the programs and services to be provided and the way in which they are offered will involve government working in collaboration with our communities.

In the spirit of cooperation, the Government of Saskatchewan last summer released a paper called *Children First: An Invitation to Work Together*. As part of the Saskatchewan child action plan, Mr. Speaker, this paper invited communities to work with us, to improve the well-being of children and of families.

Details of the 1994-95 initiatives were announced this morning by the ministers of Health, Education, Justice, and myself, Mr. Speaker. And I thank them and all of the other participating departments for their participation in this departmental-wide activity, integrated activity on behalf of children and families. Mr. Speaker, it is my intention at the end of my

remarks to table the document that was released this morning outlining all of those initiatives.

(1615)

The initiatives of over 4.4 million under the Saskatchewan action plan for children announced in the budget speech is a response to what these organizations and communities have identified as key priorities — an increased focus on prevention, early intervention, and supports to vulnerable families.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Liberal Party says that there's nothing in this budget for Saskatchewan people and families, she's criticizing Saskatchewan communities, because these ideas came from Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan communities.

Consistently, people and organizations called for community shaped and directed responses supported by government in a new role, Mr. Speaker, as facilitator. They also highly endorse the need to work collaboratively, to work together across boundaries and across mandates to provide a more holistic service. Through consultations, people have emphasized that we must move together to action.

What has already been done under the child action plan, Mr. Speaker? I know this will interest you, Mr. Speaker, because you have a 20-year history of being concerned about health and well-being of families and communities, having served as ministers of Social Services and Health.

Let me outline several actions that have been undertaken both provincially and in our communities. Firstly, people and organizations within communities have come together to work on integrated actions on behalf of children and families. Participating departments have used the policy framework in development of new legislation, policy, programs, and services. A children and family's agenda is part of each department's overall planning. And, Mr. Speaker, all of the departments work jointly on children's initiatives for 1994-95, and I thank my minister colleagues, their departments, and my caucus colleagues for this.

Let me provide a few examples of initiatives already introduced under the action plan. One, the integrated school-based services strategy to better address the unmet needs of children in schools across the province. Mr. Speaker, another report initiative: working with first nations people to develop and delivery their own services. Agreements have already been signed by the province with three Indian and child family service agencies, and groundwork is being done with the Metis Society of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the fact that it was the Metis Society of Saskatchewan who I met as my first official duty as Minister of Social Services. I am honoured, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Morin, their president, indicated at a meeting last week that the openness and cooperation extended by Social

Services that is a credit to myself as minister and to all of our staff, which is quite in contrast to the picture painted today by the Liberal leader.

Mr. Speaker, among the most exciting things that the Department of Social Services and the Government of Saskatchewan is doing, in my personal view today, under the action plan, is pursuing these agreements for Indian and Metis people to take over their own child welfare services. These are historical events and this action is long overdue. But, Mr. Speaker, we're proceeding as we should, and I commend the first nations people and the Metis Society members for their cooperation and leadership in this new partnership.

Mr. Speaker, a further important initiative under the action plan, child action plan, is the La Loche and Prince Albert preschool pilot projects, Mr. Speaker, to support children and families in a preventive way.

Another action, the provincial parenting initiatives supporting parenting education opportunities — a big need in Saskatchewan today. Support to the West Flats community in Prince Albert in developing a range of community-based programs and services for their children and families. I have met with this group, Mr. Speaker, and this is a community development model for the rest of us to pattern.

And there are some other good examples, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatoon Riversdale community association is working very closely with P.A.(Prince Albert), and the La Loche community is working on a community development strategy. And I was very impressed with the strength, commitment, and the dedication of the people of La Loche during my visit there.

Mr. Speaker, another initiative, the child care review where we consulted with stakeholders on legislation and program directions in the future of child care in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, challenges lie ahead in child care for all of us — for single parent families, for rural farm families, for aboriginal people, and low income people generally.

Mr. Speaker, when we're counting on the federal government to support us here in a national child care strategy.

Another initiative, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's children's service integrated project to coordinate and provide services to high-risk children age 6 to 12. The family connections program to link permanent wards of the Minister of Social Services with a lifetime family through adoption or return to the family of origin.

Another initiative, the youth at risk strategy, developing sports, culture and recreational opportunities for youth at risk. Review of the support by the legal system to families experiencing family breakdown. Promotion of child safety on the farm, a very critical concern to rural Saskatchewan, one which is being acted upon by the government and rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, two additional areas of program development: a parent awareness program focused on the behaviours of children using alcohol and drugs, and development of a new risk assessment and case management model for working with at-risk families.

While we're developing well-defined protocols at the community level, enhancing staff training and assigning casework responsibility and accountability to make sure that we provide the best possible support to families who require it.

Respite continues to be a high priority for families who have children with severe behavioural difficulties or who are medically fragile. Enhanced respite pilot projects have been successful in both Saskatoon and Yorkton. The government is working with community-based service providers to further enhance respite capacity in a number of areas, Mr. Speaker.

These and many other initiatives under the action plan for children. All the plans are being led by a particular department, are the joint initiative of several departments, or involving partnership between government as a whole and community or provincial organizations. A full report, Mr. Speaker, of the consultations, strategies, and actions under the action plan will be made available this summer.

I want to mention at this point that the government continues to work with the early childhood intervention program Saskatchewan incorporated, the provincial early childhood intervention program's council to develop and support home-based interventions to lessen the impact of disability on young children and their families.

Mr. Speaker, 25 spaces are being added to the early childhood intervention program . . . were added in 1993-94, and the government is going to continue with this work to add additional spaces in 1994-95 and eliminate the existing waiting-lists.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll briefly touch on the new initiatives in this budget with regard to the action plan for children. The government is committed to the prevention of problems, Mr. Speaker. The \$2.08 million allocation in the 1994-95 budget will improve prevention and early intervention services that stop problems from developing in the first place. Informing and educating to prevent problems from occurring, rather than treating them after the fact, is consistent with the goals of health reform.

With our country's current economic situation and our complex social issues, we also have to recognize that many Saskatchewan families are facing serious difficulties and challenges. We want to ensure that vulnerable families have access to the services they need to restore them to health and social well-being; \$2.35 million is allocated under the action plan for supports to vulnerable families, Mr. Speaker. So 2.08 million for prevention and another 2.35 million for

actual family supports, Mr. Speaker.

The departments of Health, Education, Training and Employment, and Social Services are setting aside \$1.65 million this year for community-based prevention. Numerous community groups have put forth ideas on prevention projects and integrated activities. Supports for vulnerable youth, promotion of healthy lifestyles, early childhood programming for vulnerable children, strengthening of children's problem solving and coping skills, and improved quality and availability of parent education opportunities are the types of programs that may be developed. Three hundred thousand dollars will be used in support of school-linked service strategy announced last year, Mr. Speaker.

The preschool projects in La Loche and Prince Albert, as I indicated, starting in 1993, are excellent examples of community-based preventive programs and integrated services where those communities identified those as their priority choices. These two preschool projects will receive \$98,000 each for the year 1994-95.

Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars is allotted to another preventive measure — the establishment of the Children's Advocate, as we indicated today, Mr. Speaker. The Children's Advocate will be associated with the Office of the Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker.

And I might just clarify the concern that the Liberal leader had with regard to the Ombudsman. The difference between our model and other models is that the model in Saskatchewan will make sure that the child advocate is accountable to the legislature as a whole, not to the Minister of Social Services. That is the big difference. So that member will have the opportunity to give some advice on the process and the individual selected.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I'm saying is that, give us some credit. We took into account what the other models were doing and analysed their experiences and took their advice on how to establish our model in a way that ensures that the accountability is to here. We did that very deliberately. We gave that independence very deliberately, Mr. Speaker.

The child advocate will engage in public education on the needs of children, youth, and their families; will be available to individuals, children, and youth in crisis; and will work with government systems to ensure their services meet the needs of children and youth. Mr. Speaker, this will be a proactive office, a proactive role. And, Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased with this initiative.

And \$81,500 is being set aside by the Department of Justice for yet another preventive initiative — school liaison and outreach. Plans to prevent crime and victimization by building children's understanding and trust in the justice system will be implemented, including the pilot placement of school liaison officers. And in cooperation with local communities, crime prevention and court orientation and support

programs for children, especially in rural areas on reserves, will be implemented.

I've talked about the preventative initiatives, Mr. Speaker, the early intervention initiatives; what about the supports, the actual supports for vulnerable families in the budget? Well \$225,750 is being set aside by the Department of Social Services for child care and child crisis services. Funds will be targeted to northern Saskatchewan, an area of the province with the highest rate of teen pregnancies. Programs provide child care for children of teen parents attending high school and child care services for families experiencing temporary crises.

Evidence demonstrates that young parents with access to infant care remain in school longer, thereby increasing their opportunities for financial independence.

Funds will also be provided for child crisis services for families experiencing a temporary crisis. This is prevention, Mr. Speaker; this is early intervention — preventing problems before they become problems.

Resources will be used to facilitate an aboriginal child care support network. This will enhance delivery of aboriginal care services, and allow child care providers to participate in forums and workshops, sharing information and gaining peer support. As a result, aboriginal child care providers will have greater access to culturally appropriate programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, \$599,000 is to be allocated by the Departments of Justice and Social Services, as well as the Legal Aid Commission for the Unified Family Court. The approach and services of the Unified Family Court are being expanded across the province to ensure that the justice system deals with family breakdown and other family law issues involving children in a supportive and less adversarial manner.

(1630)

Having spent 15 years as a practising social worker in this province, Mr. Speaker, I would say that this initiative alone will save families as the focus shifts to reconciliation and mediation rather than advocacy which pulls and tears families apart.

In a complimentary fashion, legal aid resources are being enhanced to ensure the most vulnerable families have access to legal representation when family issues are dealt with in the court. This is an important family law initiative. Mr. Speaker, \$750,000 is being set aside by the Department of Social Services for family violence initiatives.

Funding is allocated for 1994-95 for community-based outreach services, support to existing services and services to aboriginal families. The government is working with communities on initiatives that will begin to provide services to victims of family violence in their communities.

As only one example, Mr. Speaker, the government is working with the Weyburn-Estevan committee against family violence on the creation of services for that area.

Funds will also be allotted for aboriginal services in northern Saskatchewan. Both of these areas were previously underserved for victims of family violence and sexual assault, as were some other areas of the province. And their needs are being met as well, Mr. Speaker, to a significant extent.

Mr. Speaker, I can say to the residents of Saskatchewan that the government has met most of the family violence requests it had received from across the province. This is an achievement; I know it will be recognized by families across Saskatchewan. Discussions about other projects supporting community priorities are under way and will be announced as they are finalized.

Mr. Speaker, because communities are defining their needs, developing their solutions, and determining their priorities in a community development manner, all of the decisions with regard to how the \$750,000 will be spent have not yet been formalized. The communities will make those decisions and choices.

Seven hundred and seventy-seven thousand dollars and five . . . pardon me, \$777,500 is being allocated by the Department of Justice for assistance to child victims and witnesses, another initiative under the child action plan.

Several initiatives directed specifically to children are being pursued as a part of the range of services for victims of crime. Projects to coordinate effective early intervention and investigation in child abuse cases and to establish child friendly facilities to assist in integrating services provided during their investigation, prosecution, and treatment related to child abuse are being developed, Mr. Speaker. This is a very significant development in Saskatchewan.

Support for child victims during their involvement with the criminal justice process will be continued through expansion of crisis intervention services, court-based victim and witness service coordinators, and special victim and witness waiting-rooms. These also are new initiatives, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Saskatchewan has announced new initiatives and continues to improve existing programs and services for vulnerable children and their families across Saskatchewan.

The focus of our action is to resolve existing problems and prevent new ones, as I've said earlier. We want to improve access to help. Mr. Speaker, communities tell me — the 130 or so people I met with across the province during the pre-budget consultations — tell me that this government is on the right track. We are building with communities for the long term. There are no quick fixes, as the Liberal leader was suggesting. There are no magic solutions. We had megaprojects and other . . . all kinds of other Liberal-Tory type solutions in the 1980s. They don't

work, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned at the outset, the importance of the International Year of the Family is important to this government. The General Assembly of the United Nations has proclaimed 1994 as International Year of the Family. The theme — family resources and responsibilities in a changing world — provides an opportunity to raise awareness on the importance of families and how they contribute to the well-being of our province.

In addition to the initiatives announced out of the action plan, Mr. Speaker, several specific and important initiatives are planned in association with this year. An information kit about the International Year of the Family has been distributed to assist the public in promoting awareness of the importance of families and strong communities. And we've had very good feedback, Mr. Speaker, on this kit.

A work and family conference is being sponsored in March by the Women's Secretariat, Saskatchewan Social Services, business, labour organizations, and community groups. This will be held in Saskatoon and we look forward to it.

International Year of the Family will be highlighted during Education Week, March 7 to 13, 1994. Proposed legislation regarding the victims of domestic violence Act will supplement laws that respond to domestic violence. The new Act focuses on meeting the needs of victims at a time of crisis and providing additional remedies for matters such as compensation for monetary loss, property issues, and restraining orders.

Proposed legislation regarding The Labour Standards Act will be particularly beneficial to low income earners. Labour reforms will benefit families by providing parents with alternatives to balance work and family responsibilities while contributing to the productive, stable workforce.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I might add that the Liberal leader could join the president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour who says . . . or their release says:

The province's largest labour organization is encouraged by the emphasis on job creation in the Budget Speech.

That's put out by Ms. Barb Byers.

So, Mr. Speaker, everybody doesn't share the cynical view of the Liberal leader. The chambers of commerce don't, the business people don't, and labour doesn't — working men and women.

So, Mr. Speaker, we want to promote, as I said, the labour reforms to ensure that parents have a balance to work and family responsibilities while contributing to a productive and stable workplace, Mr. Speaker.

The government funds shelters for abused women and

crisis counselling services in locations across the province. As already mentioned, services to victims of violence will be enhanced under the family violence initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I might add that I'll be meeting in a few minutes with some of the Transition House people. In fact we were supposed to meet earlier, and I thank them for their patience. But we will meet as soon as I finish speaking as we continue to have dialogue with those around the province who are involved in trying to deal with family violence.

The government will continue to fund community groups and Social Service's safety net programs that provide child feeding programs. One million dollars was allocated for this in 1994-95, Mr. Speaker, so to say nothing is being done isn't quite fair, Mr. Speaker, by the Liberal opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the government inherited a big problem here in terms of the massive food bank line-ups. We're making a dent on that. The economic signs are positive that the situation is beginning to be turned around.

Mr. Speaker, the steps that I've outlined today — thank you for your patience; I know it's been a long speech — but the steps I've outlined today are of interest to communities in Saskatchewan; they're of interest to families and children.

These steps are very significant, Mr. Speaker. We're meeting our promise of deficit reduction without sacrificing children and families. We believe that supporting children, families, and communities today will lead to a strong, healthy, and stable future for Saskatchewan. And because of this, I again thank my colleagues and the Saskatchewan communities for doing such a fine job in the toughest of circumstances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, we are still innovative pioneers. Like Tommy Douglas was in the earlier years, we're doing the same thing in 1994 — not only Tommy, but generations like him. Mr. Speaker, they had challenges; they met them with courage, energy, and sensitivity. And Mr. Speaker, this is what we're attempting to do. And we're doing it with the cooperation, the input and the participation, and I would say support of the Saskatchewan public, and I would encourage the opposition to join in that positive process.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure and an honour to be able to stand in this Assembly today to make a few comments and to speak to the budget address as it's been presented by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, a quick review of the budgetary address

that was presented the other day by the Minister of Finance, one would have to say that the Minister of Finance probably deserves an A plus, and I say that very carefully, and suggesting that the reason I would give it an A plus is because it was a very politically astute and skilfully crafted budget.

And I think we just need to take a look at some of the comments in the local media and how the media have almost fallen over each other to give the minister accolades for the presentation that was made.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, as I get into my speech I want to bring out some of the facts that the minister forgot to cover. And when I suggest the minister deserves an A plus, and the government, for their budgetary presentation, certainly the fact that they were able to cover up the real increases and the real impact on Saskatchewan people . . . and basically as one reporter has said, if this is good news, I'll take the bad, it certainly indicates to us that there are some people out there who are willing to take a look at the budget and look at what wasn't said.

And even though I would give it an A plus for presentation, I would suggest it's probably below a five in the scale of one to ten as to the impact it's going to have on Saskatchewan people. In fact I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this budget on the other hand was a very devious, deceitful document.

It reminds me of an iceberg just floating in the ocean. And we all know of icebergs and the fact that 10 per cent of that ice is sitting out and is visible, and 90 per cent really is below. And the member from Swift Current is suggesting that I suggested the last year's budget was an iceberg. Well the fact is that this budget this year is just act two of last year's budget, so it really hasn't changed. And, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me the member from Swift Current would probably do well to really be a little more up front and honest with the people of his constituency and with the people of Saskatchewan.

Because first of all, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the budget here. What's the government trying to cover up? What are they trying to hide? They're suggesting that they're going to balance the books. What books specifically are they balancing? What deficit are they bringing under control, Mr. Speaker? And that's the thing that people don't understand.

The Minister of Finance can glibly stand in her position and suggest she's finally got the deficit under control, when all she's doing is jiggling the books, as the auditor has pointed out to us, talked about transfers. All she is doing is yes, she's balancing the Consolidated Fund but she hasn't touched the overall deficit that the people of Saskatchewan, the taxpayers of Saskatchewan still have to work with.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the biggest problems we've faced in this province for years. And that's why I called it a politically correct document, the fact that politics have come to play again and in the way the Minister of Finance has brought forward her budget.

Let's look back to the 1982 budget brought forward by the then Blakeney government prior to their going to the polls. They suggested at that time that there was a \$139 million surplus, that the government was operating with a surplus. The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, that that was just one arm of government; the Consolidated Fund had a surplus. But take a look at the Crowns. Where were the Crowns?

And also, Mr. Speaker, the government of the day neglected to tell the people of Saskatchewan that they had a \$5 billion overrun and underfunded pension liabilities.

And just two years ago, the auditor brought that out again when he suggested that there's one thing, not only did the government forget to tell us where the total debt was in relating where the Crowns are, in relationship to the Consolidated Fund and the overall expenditures, but the government very craftily forgot to bring about the information showing the fact that there was \$3 billion of underfunded pension liabilities that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan are responsible for.

(1645)

One columnist I would just like to read a few quotes from, Mr. Speaker, it's *Leader-Post* article, February 18, 1994:

It is a testament to how far this government has lowered our expectations that Janice MacKinnon can call this a "good-news" budget and get away with it.

Basically what we have here is a budget that continues to beat up on the province. It really is just an extension — part two, if you will — of last year's bad-news budget.

And that's why I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, we can continue to refer to this iceberg budget, sequel no. 2.

The writer goes on and says:

MacKinnon tells us there are no tax increases in the budget, "not even any tax-base broadening." (Then he says) We should be thankful that the 10-per-cent deficit surtax on income this government introduced two years ago has not been increased. We're expected to feel relieved that the nine-per-cent provincial sales tax, which the Romanow government hiked by 20 per cent over its last two budgets, was not hiked again.

Then there is the "good news" for third parties that receive much of their funding from the province. The various municipal councils, school boards, universities and hospitals should get in line to take their beating, and then show their appreciation because they were told it was coming.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if indeed the taxpayers of this province have something to really be happy about, I guess they can be happy in the fact that the Minister of Finance was able to stand in her place in this Assembly and very forcefully, and the member responsible for Gaming eloquently would suggest that she could say, no new taxes.

But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if she was able to say it with a feeling of . . . or able to say it very freely in suggesting that there were no new taxes when in the back of her mind she knew that she'd already expanded the taxes into 1994 in the 1993 budget.

Going back to the article, it says:

As Janice MacKinnon says, "we have broken the back of the deficit".

Some would argue that's not all this government has broken.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I over the next few days are going to bring out some of the ideas and some of the facts of where we see the people of Saskatchewan have been led down the garden path. And I noticed how some of the members on the opposite benches seem to be turning their back at the present time and suggesting, no, I shouldn't be relating this information. But I think it's important that we bring forward that information.

Mr. Speaker, when I go back to the spring of 1991 when my colleague, the member from Weyburn, the then Finance minister, the hon. Lorne Hepworth, brought his budget in, his budget at that time suggested that if passed and all projections were reached, there would be a \$265 million deficit in the Consolidated Fund in the province of Saskatchewan.

And when you look at this budget, Mr. Speaker, if you took out all the jiggery-pokery that has taken place over the last two years, the government of today could indeed have met the \$265 million deficit in 1991 and in fact today we could be operating with a surplus in the Consolidated Fund, working at getting the total deficit of the province under control.

But what did we see? Mr. Speaker, we were looking at the books for Crown Investments Corporation, and that's why I suggest and my colleagues have suggested that some of the reforms of this House should have the chairman of Crown Corporations should come from the opposition benches.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is when we looked at the books, and the deputy minister of Finance was in Crown Corporations at the time, we looked back. And I believe it was another editorial who brought out the fact that in 1991 after the October election, because Mr. Hepworth's budget wasn't allowed to pass.

And I remember the debate at the time, back and forth, and how the members presently in government — as opposition — said, we will make this province ungovernable; we will not allow you to pass that

budget. And I wonder why.

I think, Mr. Speaker, they knew in the reality that, as the Finance officials of the day had indicated, that the budget was coming closer than it had ever been to becoming a document of putting the numbers out so Saskatchewan people knew exactly where they were. And yes, Mr. Speaker, that budget didn't pass.

So what happens? By the time we reach the spring of 1992, Mr. Speaker, we look. And unfortunately it's a year and a half later when we finally got into the Crown Investments Corporation and looked at their documents. And lo and behold, instead of a \$250 million dividend from the Crowns to the Consolidated Fund in the budget of 1991-92, there is actually no dividend, but there is also a transfer of 500-and-some million dollars in debt write-off to the Consolidated Fund.

And if you put that together with the \$265 million deficit that Minister Hepworth was projecting, add on the \$250 million dividend that wasn't transferred, the 500-and-some million that was transferred out of the Crowns — all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, what do we have? As the Minister of Finance . . . and even at that time the government of the day had a hard time deciding where to put their budget, where to put their deficit, because it seemed to vary from one minister to the next. Minister of Finance appointed 1991 — and unfortunately I can't think of the member's riding; Regina north-east I believe is what it is — had indicated that the deficit now ballooned from 500 to 800 million.

And then the Premier was around. He suggests that no, it's going to be a little higher than that. And then at the end of the day what did we see? A deficit of almost \$1.2 billion that the government seemed to accumulate from the time they were elected in October of 1991 till March of 1992, which was the end of the fiscal year of the day.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we listened to the budget presentation the other day, one has to wonder, when are politicians in general going to quit trying to manipulate the figures and become totally honest and open with the people that they serve?

As I suggested earlier, the Minister of Finance, the present government, the Premier of this province could have accepted and gone with the numbers as they were presented in 1991, the spring of 1991. Unfortunately the government was so intent that it was going to destroy and rub as much salt into the wounds of the Conservative Party as they could, that they weren't willing to read the numbers. They weren't willing to accept — I would even suggest — the suggestions of the Department of Finance that these are true figures, these are honest figures; bring them forward, you can balance your budget, and you'll get the credit by 1994.

Instead the then members — the Premier, and his Finance minister, and the government — decided to inflate the deficit. Inflate the deficit and now they . . .

what have they done? Going back to the CIC reports, that same document indicated — that same annual report indicated — that in 1992, all of a sudden, the '92-93 budget year, the government transferred \$179 million in dividends from the Crowns to the Consolidated Fund and only moved \$45 million across in debt from the Crown Investments Corporation, for a turnaround of \$139 million, plus the fact they'd already written off \$500 million.

All of a sudden, Mr. Speaker . . . And, Mr. Speaker, I don't stand here as an accountant who really understands the accounting procedures totally in this province or who has a real understanding of all accounting. But I stand here, Mr. Speaker, as an individual who's sat down with the auditor trying to get a better understanding of how we work the books in the province of Saskatchewan, how the books are made available and open to the public of Saskatchewan.

And that's why I would suggest, after having looked at what transpired in 1991-92, what took place in '92-93, and where we are today, for the sake of the electorate out there, it's time we as politicians got our heads together and came up with a policy that laid out the total debt and the spending of government from the Consolidated Fund, from the pension funds to the Crowns so that the people of Saskatchewan knew exactly where we were.

Because, Mr. Speaker, the deficit is not as the government would like to claim, 14 or \$15 billion. The total debt owed by the people of Saskatchewan today and in the auditor's statement '91-92 is some \$20 billion — \$20 billion that we as taxpayers must pay for. Now whether we transfer it from the Crowns to the Consolidated or from the Consolidated Fund to the Crowns, it doesn't make any difference. We as taxpayers are held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me . . . That's why I find it interesting that the media would find it very easy to jump on the bandwagon and give the Minister of Finance a number of accolades before they have even taken the time to really get into the in-depth review of the budgetary process and spending across the province of Saskatchewan. Though I suppose maybe the media suggests that if the budget . . . if the Consolidated Fund is balanced at the expense of the Crowns, the Crowns should be able to carry themselves; therefore the debt sits with the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, what's been happening over the past few years? What did we see even just this past winter? What's coming up tomorrow? The fact that the government is calling for another major dividend to be paid out of the Crowns to the Consolidated Fund in the 1993-94 budget, Mr. Speaker, indicates to me that you and I as taxpayers may not be paying directly but indirectly.

We're going to see further increases in our telephone rates, in our power rates, in our energy rates, in our SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) rates. In

fact, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take you long when you start looking at all the bills that are coming due . . . even your car insurance, where is it sitting today to where it was two or three years ago? Or to even just get your licence, what does it cost you today compared to what it was two years ago? And Lord knows what it's going to be tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, when you take a look at that, yes, the Crowns can run on their own if the government's going to use them as a tool to generate revenue and then transfer it to the Consolidated Fund. Is that fair? Is that right? Is that being truthful? Is the government really being honest? School boards, health care givers, municipal governments all across this province are facing the effects of what has taken place in the past few years and what has taken place even in this budget that was presented.

I look at another article that was written and most of the media seem to pick up on this where they mention the fact: I think we can say very honestly is that the back has been broken of the financial problem, MacKinnon said, noting that the government remains on track for a balanced budget by 1996-97. But that doesn't mean people won't feel a tax bite this year, thanks to more than 198 million in spending cuts last year that take effect in '94-95. They include major cuts to third-party grants, rising from 2.8 per cent for hospitals up to 8.8 per cent for municipalities.

And, Mr. Speaker, the interesting part is, part of the balance, the budget approach that the government are looking at, they're praying — and I'm not sure, maybe they all should be getting on their knees — they're praying that Mr. Martin doesn't indeed cut more transfers, more of his federal transfers. Because if there are cuts in federal transfers, which the government continues to suggest the federal government has no responsibility in doing, in cutting transfer payments, if there are cuts it's going to affect their budget.

And might I suggest that if Mr. Martin should happen to cut his transfers that this government won't be far behind in cutting more transfers and passing it on to the people of Saskatchewan — indirectly through taxation, through power rate increases, through telephone rate increases, everything that you and I touch and work with on a daily basis.

And, Mr. Speaker, just talk to school boards. Take a moment, talk to the . . . even teachers out there are becoming worried because their jobs are on the . . . jobs are affected, Mr. Speaker. The availability of teaching positions is being affected.

And where are they being affected the most, Mr. Speaker? They're being affected in areas like the constituency I represent, the constituency of Moosomin. The Moosomin school district, the Broadview school district, the Arcola school district, Mr. Speaker, are all facing the challenge of trying to balance their budgets, trying to spend their money efficiently and effectively to provide the best possible education to the youngsters in the area without going to the taxpayers again and asking them for a greater

increase, or going to the municipalities and asking them for an increase in taxes on their land base.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is one of the sorest spots that you're going to find rural residents facing, is the fact that every time they turn around and they go down to pay their taxes that the greatest tax bite when they write out their cheque per quarter goes to the educational field, and then to health. And, Mr. Speaker, for many people, for many people that means they're spending for something they have no control over and that they don't even have any involvement in. Mr. Speaker, what I find most people complaining about is the fact that the feeling is that when the taxes are based strictly on property, that only certain people end up carrying the load.

The Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock this House stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.