

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
February 13, 1995

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Bradley, seconded by Mr. Knezacek.

Mr. Cline: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin my remarks this evening by saying thank you to my constituents in Saskatoon Idylwyld. It is an honour for me to continue to represent them in this Assembly, and I do appreciate their support and encouragement, guidance, and advice which I receive on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker, and without it I would not be able to do my job the way that I would like to do it.

I'm very pleased to rise this evening, Mr. Speaker, to participate in this debate on the Speech from the Throne which was delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor a week ago today. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I will not in my remarks get too carried away in a partisan vein. I think we tend sometimes to engage in exaggeration about the good job we're doing — although it is a good job — and just as the opposition sometimes could be accused of being maybe a bit too critical of the government and its record, and engages in some exaggeration as well.

So I hope that politics will not unduly pervade my remarks this evening, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stick to the facts as I see them and talk about some of the things that are going on in our province and the way I think that my neighbours see them based upon what they tell me in my community of Saskatoon.

Now in terms of how my neighbours are seeing things these days, Mr. Speaker, I can only go on the basis of what people are telling me in Saskatoon. And I must say that for the first time in quite some time, and certainly as a stark contrast to when the last election was held in 1991, there is a real feeling of hope and optimism in my community and, I think, throughout the province.

People do not believe these days that government is perfect, that any government is perfect or doesn't make mistakes, and they don't believe that we have all the answers. But I feel that it's fair to say that they do believe that this government is made up of competent individuals who are providing good fiscal management to us and engaging in proper planning of our affairs.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that if I could sum up the Speech from the Throne and its message to the people of the province in a few sentences, I would say this. I would say that the current Government of Saskatchewan has built a solid and firm

foundation in our province and we're at the stage now where we can begin to build on that foundation with, as I said, some optimism and hope.

I think that's what competent management gives the people. I think it gives them two things. First of all it gives them confidence, confidence that we're back on track in Saskatchewan and our institutions and our assets are being properly shepherded and managed — institutions like our public utilities, our low-cost insurance system and our public system of medicare, systems we want to see sustained and we want to see improved upon.

So the type of management we're getting from our government gives us optimism and it gives us hope. It gives us hope that we'll never again be in fear of the total financial collapse of our province, and hope that good management will mean we won't have to increase taxes and over time that we can reduce taxes. We've already seen in the area of our public utility, SaskEnergy, that proper management of that corporation has meant that it is not operating in a deficit situation and when the corporation has a saving it can properly pass that saving on to the people of the province.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that people in our province believe that things are under control. They know that a solid foundation has been laid in our province and they know that we're going to build on it. I think they expect that the government will probably go to the polls in the relatively near future and I think it's fair to say that they expect that the government will be returned.

It doesn't mean that they agree with all of the measures we've taken or everything we've done. And I think, Mr. Speaker, it would be a sad day in our province if we had no controversy about government. It would be a sad day if Saskatchewan people, who are really among the most politically sophisticated people in the world, were in complete agreement with everything the government did. I think that good government depends upon a questioning and informed public. I think we have that. All of which is to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think the Speech from the Throne delivered last Monday really captures that mood in our province.

The speech begins by talking about the fiscal management of our province, and it points out that when this government took office in the fall of 1991, Saskatchewan faced one of its darkest hours. We had had a decade of deficit budgeting where the government was spending about a billion dollars more each year than it took in. We had a lot of division in our province, and people were feeling a lot of doubt about our future.

And I'd like to contrast that dismal mood with the mood that we have today in the province of Saskatchewan. We have, as the Speech from the Throne makes clear, a legislative agenda that doesn't speak of deficits but of sustained balanced budgets and balanced budget legislation. And it doesn't speak of failed

megaprojects but of expanding local business sector and job growth.

I think that a lot has been done in that regard in just three short years. And I'm very proud to be associated with a government that doesn't just talk about getting its fiscal situation under control but actually takes action to do so.

I'm pleased that the Premier and the Minister of Finance will be asking us to approve in this session of the legislature the balanced budget Act, requiring the government to have a plan for long-term financial stability and integrity in our finances. And the reason I'm pleased about that, Mr. Speaker, is I know that without that kind of planning, we may get ourselves into a situation such as we faced three years ago. And I think we all agree that never again should we in Saskatchewan find ourselves in that situation.

I'm pleased as well that in the area of the members of the legislature, the government has appointed an independent committee to make recommendations on our salary and allowances. I think that we need procedures to make us appear to be accountable and in fact to make us accountable for the monies we receive from the public.

And those two things, Mr. Speaker, financial stability and public accountability, will not only inspire further confidence and trust in the public, but they will in the long run place us in good stead to provide proper government to the people of the province.

The solid foundation that is being laid by the government, Mr. Speaker, has seen some results which I think are not a result purely of what the government has done, but are a corollary or a logical consequence of what the government is doing. Because we have more confidence in ourselves, our population has increased since 1992. It's now at the highest level in five years. And in the last 12 months, 12,000 more people are working than they were a year ago. I think that's also an indication that we're making a comeback in Saskatchewan.

And I suppose in terms of the theme in the throne speech, which I said a few minutes ago was one of having built a solid foundation, now moving to build on that foundation, that theme really means this. It means that having got our fiscal house in order, the government can move on to what is a new and also important priority, and that is the priority of job creation.

And I was very pleased at some of the remarks of the Premier in the last few weeks where he said, and the throne speech says, that the government will show the same focus and determination with the job challenge as it has already applied to the deficit challenge, because I believe, Mr. Speaker, that's what the people want. They know that the deficit is behind us. They've heard a lot about deficits and gloom and doom in the last few years. What they now want to see is a government committed to getting people to work in Saskatchewan, even more so than has occurred in the last 12 months.

There are some good things happening, I think. In northern Saskatchewan, the mining sector is expanding. There are several projects under way at the present time which will result in hundreds of new jobs. I think it's positive too, Mr. Speaker, that northern residents currently represent 45 per cent of the workforce at these projects, but the target is 60 per cent northern employment. And I think we can all agree that in a province with a vast northern portion where I think unemployment is 70, 80 per cent in many communities, we have to recognize that one of the objectives we should have is to share the fruits of the earth with the people in the North and get them working. And in the long run, when we realize that our province is big enough for all of the people that live here, we'll all be better off if we pursue that kind of policy. I think what is happening in the mining sector is very positive.

I'm pleased as well that the government is committed to putting increasing resources into our highway system and acting in partnership with communities and businesses and other governments to modernize our highway system. That certainly is something that is an important part of economic development in Saskatchewan.

I want to say a few words, Mr. Speaker, about our energy needs and energy development. The Speech from the Throne indicates that the Saskatchewan energy strategy for security and prosperity will be presented to this House, and I'm very glad to hear that. I know that the work of the energy development and conservation institute in Saskatoon has been very, very good work. It has been factual in the sense that, rather than have a megaproject mentality that you can spend a billion dollars and solve our economic problems even though you put the people in debt by doing so, rather than doing that the Authority has looked at the facts in Saskatchewan and looked at our energy needs.

The Authority has indicated in its preliminary reports that we have enough energy generating capacity to meet our needs, I believe, into about five years into the next century. And the Authority has looked at the costs of each kind of energy development and concluded that we can do just as much by trying to conserve energy, just as much both in terms of meeting our needs and economic development and employment, by looking at energy conservation, as we can by having a megaproject mentality which I think is a dated mentality, Mr. Speaker.

(1915)

And when I hear some of the opposition politicians in this House get up and criticize the government because we're not committing ourselves to spending a minimum of \$1.2 billion of public money to build a nuclear reactor in Saskatchewan, I really wonder where they're coming from. I think, Mr. Speaker, that when they do that they're misleading the people in the sense that they're talking about a development which of course would create some jobs in its development, but which would result in a facility which would produce about 450 megawatts of energy per year which there wouldn't be any market for.

And I think that the proponents of that kind of thinking have to take the next step, Mr. Speaker, and explain to the people of the province how the acquisition of massive new debt is going to help the people of the province, how it will help the people of the province to spend a lot of money on something we don't need.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, we have to move beyond that and we need people who will seriously and rationally and in a factual way look at the energy needs of our province and make rational recommendations which will serve our purposes. And I have to say that I have not seen that, unfortunately, from the opposition parties in this House, but I am very glad to say that I think the approach being taken by the government is such a rational approach, and I'm very proud to associate myself with that kind of clear thinking rather than the alternative.

The alternative to the megaproject mentality, that got us into a lot of trouble in the '80s, Mr. Speaker, would be the kind of approach being taken by the Minister of Economic Development and the government and the chambers of commerce and the regional economic development authorities in the *Partnership For Progress*, which is the economic development strategy of Saskatchewan which has been in print for about two years, I believe. Because what it recognizes is that we should put our resources into things that make sense.

And I was very pleased to hear His Honour in the Speech from the Throne talk about future prosperity in Saskatchewan being dependent upon the growth of knowledge-based industries such as information technology, which we are world leaders in, telecommunications, and biotechnology.

In my home city of Saskatoon the number of firms engaged in biotechnology at Innovation Place has increased I think almost threefold in the last three years. And of course the United Nations recognizes Saskatoon as one of five centres of excellence for agricultural biotechnology in the world. And of course we're the leading centre in Canada.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that what is going on is the kind of development we need and the kind of thinking we need, in contrast to those that believe that you can spend a bunch of public money on megaprojects and with the snap of your fingers solve all of our economic problems. What we need is rational thinking, factual thinking, and thinking that leads to sustained economic development that makes sense.

And what makes sense in Saskatchewan is relying upon our strength in telecommunications, as we're doing by building telephone systems at the Chunnel between England and France, building telephone systems around the world, and selling the expertise we have in Saskatchewan to people that need it.

And what makes sense is to develop the agricultural biotechnology industry that now employs over 600 people in Saskatoon, and to continue to identify our strengths and build on them.

I would note in regard to the agricultural biotechnology industry that 30 per cent of Canada's agricultural biotechnology sector is located in Saskatchewan, and especially in the city of Saskatoon. And we're acquiring a world reputation for excellence and our sector is expanding. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that hundreds and hundreds of people are going to be employed in that field, which is good news for the people I represent in Saskatoon and good news for our province.

The development of agricultural biotechnology and the communications . . . telecommunications and information-based industries depends upon training. And in line with the job strategy the government . . . the economic development strategy of the government, the government is starting to train people through the Future Skills program, which is a \$10 million program, and through a new program, JobStart, which is going to be an important new initiative which will help young people make the transition to the workplace. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that those are very important initiatives and it's more good news in the Speech from the Throne.

The people, Mr. Speaker, I think have been watching carefully what's happening in our health system, and it's my belief that what has been done by the former minister of Health, the member from Regina Hillsdale, and the current Minister of Health, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, is a very good thing. And the reason I think it's a good thing is I think it is needs based. It looks at the health care needs we have in our province, and it tries to bring about a rational system of delivery of health care through the health districts.

In my city, Saskatoon, the three hospitals formerly had each their own hospital board and would compete for public dollars for their departments and different technologies that they have in the hospitals. I think it makes a lot of sense to have a coordinated and integrated approach in health care and to have those three hospitals governed by one board along with home care, some of the nursing homes like Parkridge and Sherbrooke and the Community Health Unit, to name some of the components of that health care system.

And the reason I think it makes sense, Mr. Speaker, is it is sort of one-stop shopping in the sense that I used to get calls from people in my constituency office that had a parent that needed some kind of care, and sometimes the home care people would say, well she's really not somebody we should be looking at; she should be in a nursing home. But the nursing home people would say well, no, she's not somebody we should be looking at; she should be in a hospital. But you'd go to the hospital people, and they would say, well actually she should be in a nursing home.

And with the Saskatoon Health Board there's a responsibility there, and the buck has to stop within that system because they have to do an assessment of the person's needs, and they have to make a decision as to what kind of care that person needs. Do they need to be in the hospital? Do they need to be in the nursing home? Or do they need to be in their own home with

nursing care through home care or meals through home care or housecleaning through home care?

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that when you examine the budget and the health care spending we now have in the province, where the home care budget has gone up dramatically in the last few years — I think by 50 or 60 per cent — that when you consider the real desires and health of Saskatchewan people, they want to be in their homes, and they want to be as independent as they can be, and they want somebody to come into their home and provide them with the care that they need. And in the long run they're going to be happier and healthier because we're moving to that kind of community-based health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cline: — The other aspect of it that I think is crucial is that when you change your health care system to spend smarter — and essentially that's what we're doing; we're spending smarter — you are trying to make a system which is sustainable. And more importantly, you're trying to have a public system which is sustainable.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that one of the important principles of medicare, which was founded in our province in 1962 and later implemented across the country, is that everybody should be treated the same, and I don't care if you're a member of the legislature or the Premier or someone living in my constituency of Saskatoon Idylwyld or someone living in Rosetown or someone living in northern Saskatchewan. If that person needs a medical procedure such as cataract removal or an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) to assess them, I think that the rules should be the same for all of those people and all the people in the province, and they ought not to be able to jump the queue and get treatment faster just because they have the money to pay.

And one of the things we do when we properly organize our health care system, and we spend smarter because we're trying to keep it a public system, is we maintain medicare the way it should be maintained, in contrast to other places like Alberta where, if you have more money, you get better care.

I got a call at my constituency office about a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, and a man phoned me who was very angry, and understandably angry because he was upset because his wife needed back surgery — and it was elective surgery — and she had waited two months for her surgery because, when there's an emergency, sometimes elective surgery doesn't take place. The person has to wait. And the man was upset and his wife was upset, and I don't blame them for that. I think that that's an upsetting kind of position to be in.

But having said that, I should say before I go on that the waiting-lists for surgery in Saskatoon are actually lower than they ever have been, because the system is better organized and people aren't taking up hospital beds that shouldn't be taking up hospital beds but are receiving care in the community.

But the man was angry and the man said to me, Mr. Cline, I know that if it was your wife waiting for elective surgery, she'd be in just like that, but my wife has to wait several months to get her back surgery. And I said to the man, now just a minute; it just so happens that my wife is waiting for elective surgery. She had to have arthroscopic surgery because of a knee injury — playing ball, I might add, in a game where the husband of the Minister of Finance also was injured, which led us to speculate that perhaps there was some kind of conspiracy against spouses of members of the legislature, but I don't think that's true.

In any event, I said to the man, look, my wife needs elective surgery. She's had to wait seven months for her surgery, and it's the same for all of us. It doesn't matter who you are in the province of Saskatchewan. And I just think that's the way it should be. I think that's the way it's going to stay in the province of Saskatchewan as long as we have people at the helm of the health care system — which we do — who believe in public health care, who don't believe that the more money you have, the better service you should have and the faster service you should have, and who want to maintain and improve upon the health care system that we have.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cline: — And just before I leave the topic of health care, Mr. Speaker, let me say that I want to join with others in paying a small tribute to the former minister of Health, the member from Hillsdale, for the work that she did in reorganizing our health care system, because she did a tough job. She was subject to a lot of criticism. And I think in this House and elsewhere she conducted herself with a lot of dignity and showed a lot of competence. And we owe her a debt of gratitude for the job that she did.

And while I'm on that topic, Mr. Speaker, I might also add that the former associate minister of Finance, the member from Swift Current, also did a superb job in the cabinet as Associate Minister of Finance and before that, Minister of Energy, two areas where, I might add, the performance of the government has been excellent. I think everyone would agree. And I'm very proud to be associated with that member as well as the former minister of Health. And I know that even though they're not in the cabinet, they will continue to do what they're primarily elected to do which is to serve the people that elect them and send them to the legislature.

(1930)

So I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very happy and proud that we will balance our budget in this term for the first time since 1982; that we will be the first province to introduce balanced budget legislation and provide a long-term plan to maintain financial stability. I'm proud that our economic growth rate is among the strongest in the country and I'm proud that we're investing in industries which hold great promise for future growth and not grasping at megaproject straws.

I'm also proud that we're going to be introducing some innovative training programs and, as I said, I'm proud that we're going to secure the future of the medicare system that our province and the party with which I'm associated, the New Democratic Party, began in Canada over 30 years ago.

The solid foundation that our province now rests upon did not come about easily; it came about because of a lot of hard work and it involved some decisions which were very difficult and politically unpopular. But decisions that eventually came to be accepted by people. Why are those decisions accepted? Because there have been results.

And I would contrast that, Mr. Speaker, with an example we've seen from Ottawa under the previous federal government when the GST (goods and services tax) came in; because when the GST came in, it was politically unpopular — it's still politically unpopular. The federal government of the day, led by Brian Mulroney, said that, well we needed it because we had a deficit problem, a debt problem, and it would go to pay the debt. And a lot of people I know said to me, well I don't like it but if it solves the debt problem, solves the deficit, I guess I'm willing to put up with it.

But what those people saw was that it didn't make any difference at all because there were no results out of the federal government in terms of deficit and debt reduction; they're still aren't any, I might add, with the new government that promised to do away with the GST as part of its plan, a promise that I doubt will be kept, quite frankly.

But in any event the contrast in Saskatchewan is this: that when the government took some decisions that were politically unpopular in order to solve the debt problem and the deficit problem, people didn't like some of the decisions, but now they're willing to accept them. Why? Because the difference is this: the people have seen results. They have seen a government that just doesn't talk about solving problems but actually resolves problems.

And that is in contrast to the previous government in this province that was in power until 1991, and it's in contrast to the previous government in Ottawa, and, Mr. Speaker, I dare say that in a year's time we'll find it's in contrast to the government we now have in Ottawa.

We don't have some shifting target in Saskatchewan where one day you're solving the deficit problem by some system of social reform and the next day that's thrown out the window and the Minister of Finance supplants what the Minister of Human Resources says and comes up with a totally different plan, or an example of the federal Minister of Health talking about ending private medicare in Alberta one day and the next day the federal government talking about getting rid of national standards in health care altogether, which I think would be a horrendous mistake.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at this government and we look at NDP (New Democratic Party) government and

ask, well what does a government by the New Democrats mean, it means planning on fiscal management and planning in health care and planning in jobs, planning that gives the people confidence and planning that gives the people pull.

And I think today Saskatchewan people do have confidence in our future and they do have hope. Things are looking up, things are going to get better, things are getting better all the time, and I'm very pleased to associate myself with this government and the throne speech. And I say to the people of the province, let's build on a solid foundation and continue to get on with the job. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud and pleased to be able to enter into the debate on the throne speech which opened this, the fifth session of the twenty-second legislature, and I will be supporting the motion before us.

I remember the privilege bestowed on me to second the throne speech for the second session, which is almost three years ago now. And I also remember what a nerve-racking experience it was to be chosen and honoured in that way, and to be able to try and reflect my views but also to be able to support the throne speech in being a seconder of the motion. And so with that experience behind me and feeling the responsibility that is placed on a mover and seconder, I want to heartily congratulate the mover and seconder for their excellent opening of the debate.

I know well the work of both members, the member from Milestone and the member from Saltcoats, because they serve on the committee of which I am privileged to chair. They make strong representation for both local government and education.

The member from Bengough-Milestone is also vice-chair of our caucus and provides a strong voice for her constituents. She is also a wife and a mother of three children and balances all her responsibilities with equal aplomb.

The seconder, lovingly known as Coach K to all those who know him and fear him, is known for his strong team skills. He's an outspoken booster for his communities, a husband, and father of four.

Mr. Speaker, as the member from Milestone said, there will be a better time and a place for us to pay proper tribute to the two members who have retired from cabinet, but I want to echo their comments. I don't think that there's been a time in our history — and I would say that I don't feel this is an exaggeration, Mr. Speaker — that we have had people who have been faced with more difficult jobs. And all of us appreciate and will remember those two members who served us well and wisely and justly.

And by the people of Saskatchewan I think they will in the future be remembered heroically for what they have done to secure the future of the province for future generations in the

area of financial integrity and the foundation of strength in our economy and for the work on the ground-breaking health care reform, a very difficult task that was placed before our member. With the portfolios they managed, they managed them with dignity and competence, and especially in the case of the member from Hillsdale, with grace under pressure.

To the new Leader of the Opposition, well it's nice to see him on the front benches, Mr. Speaker, so we can now all keep an eye on him. And seriously, it's a major task that has been given to the member from Kindersley, and despite the many columnist remarks, a worthwhile one.

I join all members also in welcoming the pages and in congratulating and welcoming Meta Woods to our Assembly. She becomes part of an able team of an Assembly official line-up that includes Gwenn Ronyk and Greg Putz and of course yourself, Mr. Speaker.

I know from past experience with you, you jealously guard our parliamentary system and a commitment to democratic debate, and to furthering the knowledge of the members in the areas of democratic process and a growth within our own personal lives in the understanding of how governments rule, not only in Saskatchewan but around the globe. We are well served by you as we exercise our duties, and we know this if we don't always show it to you, Mr. Speaker.

The debates we enter into in this Assembly are valuable to us for at least two reasons. First of course, they allow us as all members to state our views on issues and policies under review. But they also give us a chance to reflect and to state publicly and personally the reasons why we came to the important decision in our life, and that was the decision to serve; a decision to commit ourselves to public service.

I have enjoyed over the previous sessions listening then for instance to the members from Regina Lake Centre, Saskatoon Wildwood, Kelsey-Tisdale, and Biggar, just to name a few, all who very eloquently discuss their private reasons for being involved in public service and public policy development.

That is a commitment that we all share; we all shared and have many influences that affect our common goal. But I believe the goal is a strong democratic tradition which is the heart of Saskatchewan public life and at the heart of that democratic tradition I'm convinced that is our party system, a system which some recent voices have criticized.

Other members can speak of the traditions and principles of their parties, and in fact if you listen to the Liberals and the Tories at any given time, you know that they can speak for both because they are eternally interchangeable, as we listen to the dialogue and debate that they put forward on their philosophies. And from time to time we're not certain whether or not we're addressing a member from a Liberal philosophy or a Tory philosophy.

We look at the debate and the recording of the proceedings and find that often, and I'd say in most cases, that when the vote is taken the members opposite stand up together and chant in unison.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to you about the opportunity presented to me by the New Democratic Party. It's an opportunity to be part of a tradition, to be guided by a set of principles, and to be led by a vision of a decent, compassionate, and prosperous society; a party led by a Premier respected across the nation because he draws his strength from the immediate community which he serves.

Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that this party and this government, in our actions and in our decisions, reflect the beliefs of the many organizations and individuals which we all find in our constituencies. And I'm talking about a bottom-up democratic process.

When you make a commitment to serve in a public way and be in the public eye, you wonder why people are willing to set aside the many hours of time and commitment that it takes to become a member of service. And I would say that each one of us looks around our communities and the leadership that's provided by individuals in our communities as continually bolstered and cheered on by the number of hours and commitment of volunteers who serve to make our communities a stronger place to live and provide a good quality of life for all its members. And in that way we can do no less but try and match their skill and their ability and their determination and, if we care about the communities that we live in, to try and put our name forward, and if privileged, Mr. Speaker, to be able to serve them in a elected way.

There are the many volunteers who make up the boards and the committees of community organizations who work selflessly for a quality of life which consists of cooperation and compassion. These people work to give something back to society which gave much to them. And this government, as their larger instrument, attempts to reflect their dedication.

I see this every day in my constituency of Wascana Plains. I see it in the church boards, in the business and labour leaders, in the teachers and coaches to whom our youth are entrusted. They work not only for their own advancement but the betterment of all; good people working toward a good society. Other members can tell the same story about their constituencies. I draw my strength from them and I'm proud to represent them.

And as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to represent them within the parliamentary system which has been tried, tested, and trusted for close to a thousand years now.

I'm not one of those people who says we need to throw it out in favour of something totally new and untried, but I'm not one to close my eyes to the idea that systems grow and can be reformed to become stronger, to reflect the community that they serve. And to paraphrase Winston Churchill, the parliamentary

system is the worst system of government in the world except for all the other kinds.

Of course it can be improved and modernized as we in this House do consistently, as we are doing in this session, as reflected by some of the initiatives in the throne speech. The system works and those who try to make up cheap political points by pointing to its supposed faults not only undermine the institution of parliament that they serve within and that serves us all so well, but they are themselves then undermining the service that they can provide. And in fact I would say that it becomes no service at all to the greater good and to the whole system.

(1945)

Liberal and Tory cynicism are not the way to bring about democratic reform. Let me give you one glaring example, Mr. Speaker. Four thousand years ago God gave Moses the Ten Commandments — ten laws which pretty well cover all human conduct if they were to be listened to. Since then we have piled law upon law, regulation upon regulation, on top of these ten, and I don't think we've quite achieved perfection yet.

Now we have the Leader of the Third Party saying that if she were elected to government she would pass a law saying all MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) should be good. I guess God didn't know how to draft that kind of legislation.

The answer to responsible government is not another law. The answer is to have decent people running for office, people who know right from wrong without a law book always in their face, people like Douglas, Lloyd, Blakeney, Steuart, and about 99 per cent of the people who serve and have served in this Assembly in the past. Mouthing reform is easy; achieving it is even easier if you want to be willing to set aside the political rhetoric and get on with the task.

The Tories can't seem to get past the rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, so they say, let's have a LURC (legislative utilities review committee); let's have a taxpayers' protection Act; let's have free votes in the Assembly; and let's put all these restrictions on paper so we can say we've passed a law. What nonsense.

An Hon. Member: — What good will that do?

Ms. Hamilton: — What good will that do exactly, from the member. I remind them that we've had a public utilities review, a PURC (Public Utilities Review Commission) in the past. Who paid for a public utilities review were the taxpayers of this province. And let me remind the members opposite, who are now calling for a new and revitalized process of PURC, know as the LURC, what the experience of the past had been.

Let's put together a utilities review commission similar to the one of the PURC from the past, where the Tories set up an administration that the taxpayers found was very expensive. And administration, of course, if they're going to look at utility rate reviews, then had to have a number of people to serve

them, not only in a technical capacity to determine whether the rates would be fairly set or not, but in a legal capacity. All the while the taxpayers' purses were opening wider and wider to pay for the PURC.

Because the Crown corporations then must go before the PURC and talk about their utility rate review in the context of what they want to achieve and the stability that the organizations need in a financial manner. They also need some very expensive people on staff to be able to justify the rate increases. And perhaps if there are any legal questions from the PURC committee itself, they would also need to have some strong legal advice to get them out of some of the binds that might tie the hands of an organization that must compete within the community. All the while the taxpayers' purse opening up to pay for the needs to have this very expensive, publicly funded utilities review commission.

What was the result of PURC? Well in every instance that came before the Public Utilities Review Commission, the rates that were suggested and requested and reviewed by the Crown corporations were approved — in every case.

Well not exactly every case, Mr. Speaker. There was one time that there was a rate that came before the Public Utilities Review Commission and was rejected. And the former government, the Conservative government, decided that to provide for the stability of that Crown corporation the rejection would lead to an underfunding of that organization and put them in financial difficulty. So off with their heads; off with the PURC. And now to add to the public cynicism, on to LURC. Just what this community needs, Mr. Speaker, a LURC.

If they had been paying attention and the members of the third party were paying attention to the Crown utilities committee, they would know that the expanding mandate of the committee is to have the public involved in a review of the goals and objectives of the Crown corporations and, through their members, be able to challenge and to suggest and question what is the need for the utility rate increases in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that when we're looking at a growing of a mandate, you'll be able to see more public accountability in those processes in the future without us standing up and saying we're going to add to a situation of the past, that was a bad mistake of the past, under a utilities review commission that was cancelled by the members opposite.

And most recently we've seen the response to the public and to the sometimes fluctuation in the market-places in the Crown corporation sector by the decrease in the utility rates as the Crown corporations looked at and reflected what their costs were and what their requirements were for purchase, and could pass on those savings to the public. And as one of my members says, a saving of six and a half per cent, Mr. Speaker.

I remind them of course then of a totally unworkable and incredibly expensive system for the taxpayers, the taxpayers that they said they wanted to protect and are now trying to

protect with the LURC. And I remind them also that they are the authors of the flat tax, several bumps in the sales tax, the harmonized PST (provincial sales tax), and the reinstatement of the gas tax. And the list goes on and on. Where was the protection then?

The best taxpayer protection is a government living within its means, operating in its people's and its own best interest.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Some near-sighted journalists seem to think it's strange that a government wants to be re-elected. Of course they do. This government wants to be re-elected because we have a commitment to move beyond not only strengthening the foundations of this community, but wanting to be able to see some of the plans that have been put in place come to fruition and to be able to make sure that the mistakes of the past don't happen in the future, and in particularly the near future under the members of the third party who strangely now look like members of a renewed and vitalized Tory Party that have sort of, Mr. Speaker, come across from one robe wearing the robes of the Conservatives now to become new Liberal members. And we've had many examples of that happening. In the past we've had people introduced in the House that were strong supporters, financial advisers, and now advisers of the Liberal Party, who once were advisers of the Tory caucus.

Some near-sighted journalists seem to think, as I said, Mr. Speaker, that it's strange that governments want to be re-elected, but it's the best way to have people treat the taxpayers with respect and openness — go before them and ask them to judge them on the performance of not only the things that come before the House and they can see through the televised proceedings, but also in a consistent and constant and consultative manner in the formulation of policy and in the ongoing work of government. And I believe we're doing that.

Let me say just one word about the call for free votes, the call that we hear most often from not only the Conservative members opposite and the Liberals, but most often from someone in the federal arena called Preston Manning who would call for free votes. Now — free votes, whatever that means — would that mean more democracy in the Assembly? Mr. Speaker, not on your life. And I ask people in the constituencies to understand what they're saying when they fall into the trap of believing that a free vote says their member is going to stand up and vote for whatever the last person on the telephone asked for, or whatever the largest lobby group that has the largest sack of dollars can provide that member to vote in the way that they see would best serve the needs of their short sighted interests and most often their corporate gain.

I ask members to look at the federal government that's to the south of us. That's a government of free votes. It's a government that operates almost under paralysis. Is it more democratic? No. Are we well served by a system that operates through lobbyists, through members responding to the highest bidder, through more back room deals than we can even imagine in our one

lifetime? And is this what people want? I say no, Mr. Speaker. And I say if they questioned what the motive behind the call for free votes would be, they would understand more clearly what the members opposite are up to.

Besides, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, I'd ask you, don't you already have a mechanism for free votes within your caucus? I know within our caucus, we have a party discipline that allows for a member who feels strongly on principled issues to share that with his caucus, and if it weights strongly on the mind, then the member can vote according to their conscience. Why wouldn't that be in the member of the opposition party or the member of the third party? And if not, I'm asking, are their caucuses well served? And maybe this is why their members are crying for free votes.

I find it very interesting as well, Mr. Speaker, that both parties opposite are already saying their idea of balanced budget legislation is better than ours. It's taken 10 years for the members of the Conservative Party to come up with, or the Conservative caucus, to come up with an idea even thinking about a balanced budget. But, Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine why the Liberals would feel they have better ideas than ours when they haven't even seen our balanced budget legislation and already, not in the spirit of cooperation or offering alternatives; outright rejecting what they haven't seen yet.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will be proud to support our Bill when it comes forward, but I am prouder of the fact that we have balanced our budget just because it makes financial sense. Not because the Liberal leader has suggested another law, not because the members opposite feel that they found a new idea of coming to a balanced budget and weren't able to do it over the number of years that they served. I am proud that in three years, the three years ago when we announced the plan, that we stuck to it and that we'll be presenting a balanced budget, and with it the balanced budget legislation Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — And actually I could echo the words of the former minister of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) last year who said: the Minister of Finance did not stick to our deficit reduction plan; in fact she exceeded it by one year.

She didn't do that alone, Mr. Speaker; she did it with the political commitment of all the people in this province, and she did it with the support and the hours of deliberation of this caucus. And we're proud; every member, proud to stand up and support the budget that'll be presented in this House.

So, Mr. Speaker, whatever are the Tories even doing whispering balanced budget legislation? I believe there's a biblical story somewhere about looking behind and turning into a pillar of salt. There are 15 billion reasons why Tories and balanced budget legislation don't mix.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — During the last session and just two days following the budget address there were double the reasons why it seems incredible that the Liberals want to talk about balanced budget legislation, when they increased the deficit twofold in 48 hours. I will be interested to see how the members opposite under the leadership of the third party, the Liberal Party, are going to handle the idea of balancing the budget, cutting taxes, enhancing programs and services, and saying that that's all within the balanced budget legislation that they propose.

So, Mr. Speaker, with many of the mechanisms that we've put in place, accrual accounting systems, the expanded mandate of the Crown Corporations review, the accounting systems and practices that the auditor has lauded, that we've put in place and have been consistently following, the financial plan that we've put before the people of Saskatchewan, a four-year plan, including the economic forecast on which the plan has been based, now, Mr. Speaker, we have a good system and at the moment we have a government which believes in the system.

I remind the Leader of the Third Party of what she was told at her own convention two years ago. The resource person who was on the same panel with the Leader of the Third Party stated: the way to have responsible government is not to elect a right-wing party to government. And that about wraps it up and says it all, Mr. Speaker. We've seen them in operation, we've seen them at work, and soon we're going to see them at work federally.

Also, I said a minute ago, the way to have responsible government is to have a government committed to consulting with the people before acting. We have that and therefore we have community-based approaches to the challenges before us.

We have community-based health care reform, discussed very well from the member from Milestone, discussed this evening by the member from Saskatoon.

We have the *Partnership for Renewal*, discussed ably by the member from Saltcoats. We have Ag 2000 and we have the child action plan.

All of these innovative approaches have come about as a result of intense discussion and consultation with the people directly affected and the people directly involved. And that is why they are working.

(2000)

Responsible government leads to workable solutions. We have Future Skills and soon we will have JobStart, both responding to perceived needs and both involving the appropriate institutions.

In cultural development, in aboriginal policy, in gaming, in municipal affairs, we're consulting first. We're asking the questions, then we're acting.

Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I was at a meeting of the space allocation committee, under the auspices of SPMC, and we had a presentation by a man from the occupational health and safety department who ran through the background to occupational health and safety legislation. And it went something like this. It wasn't until 1973 in the province we really had the rights of the workers legislation. And the manual for protection of the workers was a little booklet that fit in the pocket of the individual who was going to oversee and look out for the safety of the individual in the workplace.

And that was done by people in the department kind of looking briefly over the information they had secured in the areas that workers may be under some duress or receive some injury and putting together the booklet.

It wasn't until 1979 that we had the first occupational health and safety legislation in the province. And at that time consultation was with the umbrella groups, the groups that oversaw by an elected process the workplace, perhaps the employers that were involved and so on.

Compare that to the update of the legislation and the regulations in 1994-95, Mr. Speaker, when the individual says that we now have established working committees that membership comes from all areas and all disciplines from the workplaces to the employer to the umbrella groups, broad consultation in each of the areas, sector by sector, to come to an understanding and a consensus building that now sees the working committees into a mode of about 92 per cent consensus on the occupational health and safety regulations that will come before us — a broad consultation process, a broad process of listening to people, understanding what the issues are, and then acting.

To contrast that, Mr. Speaker, we have a member of the third party who has said what are those yahoos doing; talking about legislation is inconsequential as workers' compensation and occupational health and safety — an élitist attitude, Mr. Speaker, when you look at someone who's trying to say that they want to see improvement in the economic forecast in this province that doesn't include strong occupational health and safety guidelines for workers and doesn't include the improvement of workers' compensation systems. Mr. Speaker, it also doesn't include in the way the members opposite had voted on the labour standards regulation that was for us when you're talking about maternity leave, pro-rated benefits for part-time workers, and the list goes on, talking about protection for those people who are greatest in need, most often the youth in our province and single parent families.

Check the approach, the broad, consultative approach, and balance that against the opposition poleaxe style of Alberta. When you look at a style that comes in and says this is the way it's going to be, and it's politically dictated from the capital *à la* Klein style, compare that with the Leader of the Third Party and the dictatorial hand that's at work in New Brunswick with health care reform that says today it was this way, but tomorrow here it is. Here's the map. Like it or lump it; you're going to work in this system. Get on with it.

Compare that to a system of consultation, of broad consultation from all sectors of the community, and of empowering people at the local level to become involved in making decisions on what's most affecting the people and their families: health care in this province, Mr. Speaker.

All of these programs have had their beginnings in the people themselves. They have worked themselves through our caucus and its committees, which have further consulted before moving them along. And then they have been put before this Legislative Assembly for much debate, more consultation, and final passage.

Mr. Speaker, the final test of course of responsible government is the test of being willing to submit to every four years or so — five if you're a Conservative or a Liberal . . . based on the substance of this throne speech and today's budget, along with the record of our last three years, I am eager to stand the test and to put ourselves before the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the initiative of this government will carry us in good stead as we go out and put our programs before the public.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — I'd like to spend a few minutes on some of the initiatives that I've personally been involved in. I may have mentioned them earlier in my speech, but just to give you a reflection of some of the things that I know from personal experience and have been involved in over the past number of years, not only on city council but now in the role as the caucus chair of local government and education, and in the caucus as a whole.

And the first one I'd like to speak to, Mr. Speaker, is something called Future Regina. If you think back to a time when I was on city council, we were faced with an economic plan of the Tory government of the day, that was called Fair Share Saskatchewan. And their idea of an economic renewal for this province was not to consult with communities, not to draw a broad base of people together and say, what would you like to see happen in your communities; what could your community sustain; and then be part of a responsible government that would facilitate the opportunity and to create a climate where the people who are involved in those industries would like to locate there in the community that's chosen that industry for themselves because they know they can sustain it, but to arbitrarily remove parts of government that had been established in Regina and other places and to move them throughout the province based on political whim and will.

It was even more devastating to the city of Regina because we thought we had come up with a plan that would show the Tory government that there was another way to do it. There was a way through economic development authorities to bring people together, to bring together business and labour, community leaders, people in the community who were actively involved in business and in development, and to set them down and decide

for themselves in each area of the province. Now it's happening through regional economic development authorities, but through . . . Regina Economic Development Authority put together a plan called Future Regina.

And at the time I was involved in setting up the first Regina Economic Development Authority and excited about the presentation to government of Future Regina and told, all of that aside, we're still going ahead with Fair Share Saskatchewan as our economic development plan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, today we see through Regina Economic Development Authority and other regional economic authorities, their strategies and their plans. And I'm glad to be a part of a strategy that presents itself in a holistic manner, in the manner of the circle. Because part of that circle includes aboriginal economic development. It includes equity employment programs. It includes the initiatives that have been put forward recently by the minister of Gaming. And it includes being involved in the manufacturing and sectors of the economy that Regina can see itself being sustainable over the long term, such as the telecommunications and information industry, the development of infotech and telecommunications technology that is being put forward by our minister responsible for interprovincial affairs.

It states and speaks to a policy of positioning Regina as the centre of prairie economic cooperation, and now becoming a member of a new organization of economic cooperation and having people from Regina who are very active in developing and furthering the ideas of economic cooperation, but seeing Regina as a centre for that development.

And it speaks to the strategy of tying in the University of Regina for its research and its development, its software technology centres, and enhancing the knowledge and development of the software technologies that will go hand in hand with becoming a part of the information highway.

Mr. Speaker, a strong plan. A plan from people across this community of Regina that came together and had a vision, and ask of government that when we look at developing opportunities that it follow a vision of the communities. What our government is doing in economic development, it's called partnership, *Partnership for Renewal*.

Well that's one of the areas that I was involved in and I watch with interest, and I will continue to watch with interest as we look at developing opportunities and particularly in the exciting area of information technologies.

But another one through the work of our committee, Mr. Speaker, one that responds to the community is called just that, *Responding to the Community*. And in *Responding to the Community*, it's a proposal for cultural development. In launching the paper, which is an extensive work, it's the proposals for cultural development, a discussion paper, the minister, the hon. member from Melfort explained to us.

And in the words of the minister, she says: may I underline that the Government of Saskatchewan currently invests a total of \$13 million in arts, cultural industries, multiculturalism, and heritage sectors through general revenues, plus another 9.8 million through lotteries. The total investment of \$22.8 million levers additional dollars from earned revenues, donations, corporate supporters, the federal and municipal governments. The multiplier effect by the involvement in the arts and the culture in our community is phenomenal, Mr. Speaker, and it's one of the six strategic areas we've identified in our *Partnership for Renewal*.

This is a plan that culminates the work that's done as I talked to you about our government's involvement in extensive consultation. It takes nine studies and two task force reports which were collectively representing all of the groups in the community and the investment they had of over a million dollars to bring forward the information to our minister, and to formulate the plan that has been put for and approved by our caucus. And I was proud to be a part of a committee that would help the minister and support the minister in launching the discussion paper.

We know that when our community is strong, when the culture in our community is strong, and through the release of this paper, that we will clearly and irrevocably demonstrate to these four vital sectors and the public that Saskatchewan government looks forward to the challenge of effecting change for the benefit of all Saskatchewan people. Change that will prepare us for a dynamic, enthusiastic and unique cultural community for the 21st century. And I'm looking forward for the results that come from *Responding to the Community*, and in particular in one of the key sectors of arts, culture, heritage, multiculturalism in our community, Mr. Speaker.

In the area of education, I was so disappointed in the member from Regina North West, when our minister was kind enough to give her a review of what was planned in education, what our plans had been in education over the past number of months, to find that she used that information to put together a little paper. She could have consulted with some of her members, in particular someone who's nominated to run in Regina Wascana Plains who works in education, who could have put her on the right path to knowing that plagiarists, as the minister says, Mr. Speaker, plagiarists fail.

We briefed her. The minister took her aside and spent time talking to her about the Future Skills program, and an idea that says not only the Labour Force Development Board brought it forward, but many groups in the community that which we'd consulted said, we can no longer afford to have a community that disregards the skills of the people who've been out there working in the workforce. Can no longer afford, when people are changing jobs and have been involved in other experiences, to not take those components of their experience and training with them, to not have it recognized as a component of their training to be involved in the workplace. And that's exactly what Future Skills does.

We've put \$10 million into provincial funding to provide recognized training leading to full-time, ongoing employment for the unemployed, including social assistance recipients; to provide employers with trained workers for new positions; to provide equity group members with employability skills leading to employment; and to improve the responsiveness of public training institutions to industry and individual training needs — to work with the community and find out where the jobs are, where the areas we can train our people that it will lead to meaningful jobs and employment.

With those areas of the business community, find out who those people who have components of those skills; work with SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) to have them recognized so they can quickly be retrained and go into an employment opportunity that is full time and will lead to full-time employment for those individuals, rather than enter the revolving door of going into training, training that leads nowhere, getting into the workforce and finding out what they were trained for isn't applicable to the market-place, Mr. Speaker.

(2015)

With that we've developed a package under Future Skills called industry skills, the components that I've talked about; community skills, the skills that are needed to become employable in our workplaces. Skills training for the future is what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker.

We shared that with the member opposite. We shared with her the apprenticeship programs for post . . . for secondary school education and we shared with her the ideas of integrated school services that provide a holistic approach — community and education working together in the areas of health and social services and education — to provide the supports for those children greatest in need; and to provide the nurturing of their skills and the development and growth of the children of our future, the workers of our future, in the development of their skills through the integrated school services program.

And we look forward to announcing more and more details of the JobStart program, which we shared with the member opposite, only to find now that it's quite encouraging that Liberals agree with what we're doing in education, but it's very disconcerting to find out that people of the stature in the community, the leaders in the community that people look to, would take that information and develop their paper and put it out as their own plan for education in the province and their own discussion paper on how things could go.

So as I said, I echo a strong disappointment of my colleagues and in particular the minister who took the time to do that and then found out how the information was being used.

We're moving ahead, Mr. Speaker. We're moving ahead in high tech and in cultural development. Saskatoon is rightly proud of its biotech industries and we're holding up the bottom of the province with ours.

I was particularly pleased with the release by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, as I mentioned, on the cultural discussion paper.

Last Wednesday we received terrific news on the economy. And it was from an unlikely source. Unlikely because according to, as I at one time had referred to her, as had the minister and the member from Elphinstone, as the princess of darkness . . . we now look on her as the queen of doom, particularly after her address to SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), the member of the third party who went around saying gloom and doom to the economy; all is dark. You can use the figures of StatsCanada and you'll see how bad it is.

And then all of a sudden had to change their tune and say, well we're going to look to some new figures because we're not really happy that we have to get out there and talk about the positive economic news in this province. The news that it says employment in our province averaged 450,000 workers during 1992, climbed to 455,000 in '93, and reached 457 in 1994. And this included a late year-over-year surge of 11,000 jobs in November and 15,000 jobs in December.

Youth employment in Saskatchewan has also shown signs of growth. Since 1992 when there was an average of 74,000 employed youth, the rate has steadily increased to 76,000 in 1994.

So our princess of darkness, who's now graduated to the queen of doom, has said, oh it's terrible out there for the economy and it's terrible out there for their youth. Well you can tell what kind of encouragement that gives to our business community and others who want to relocate here or are interested in our community, if they hear that from the members opposite.

So much better we have the chance to stand up in our return speech to the throne speech and tell people what the story is in Saskatchewan. And as we hear in some of the reporting, as we hear in some of the reports on health care, something wonderful is happening, Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, something is happening right across the economy in Saskatchewan.

This Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, is about fiscal renewal, about economic development. There is an air of optimism in the province because the two together are on the credit side, not the debit.

But it is also about community, about health care, about social responsibility. This government recognizes the earthly equivalent of the biblical verse: what does it prosper a man to gain the world and lose his own soul?

We believe that gaining financial respectability by turning loose the unprotected and vulnerable is not worth the candle.. We take it as an article of faith that both sides of the ledger have to be balanced, the fiscal and the human — or as the technocrats say, the hard side and the soft side.

We are proud that we will balance the budget. We're equally proud of the child action plan, the integrated school services plan, Future Skills, *Responding to the Community*, regional economic development, the rise in employment — a credit to the partnerships in our community, a partnership of renewal. We're equally proud of The Victims of Domestic Violence Act that is a reminder that jobs aren't everything. Hard side, soft side, jobs and security, the yin and the yang of this government's philosophy.

Mr. Speaker, because I believe in reflecting and serving the people who put their faith in me to serve in the first place, because I believe in what the New Democrat governments of the past have done and what this government is putting before this Assembly, because I believe in the form of government in which we now are serving, and because I'm proud and confident of the plans outlined in this throne speech, I will support the motion and reject the amendment before us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise in the legislature tonight to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne.

I want to first extend a welcome to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and also to Mr. Speaker, back for another session, and to compliment you both on the job that you do in keeping things running smoothly during the proceedings of the legislature. It is sometimes a hard task but you do it with such authority and grace and always with the utmost in fairness.

I would like to congratulate the mover of the throne speech, the member from Bengough-Milestone, as well as the seconder, the member from Saltcoats. You both did a fine job.

I would like to congratulate the new members of cabinet, the member from Regina Lake Centre, and the member from Athabasca. You both add experience and knowledge to your respective portfolios and I'm confident that you will both do a fine job in cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to acknowledge the wonderful constituents which I represent. Some of the finest people are located in the constituency of Redberry and it is an honour and a privilege to represent them here in the legislature and out and about in the province.

It is of course a particular honour to speak after the good news that was delivered in this Chamber to the people of Saskatchewan by the Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Jack Wiebe. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Wiebe on his appointment to the position of Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan and to commend him on his speech. I am sure he will continue to fulfil his role in an honourable and dignified manner.

The good news covered many areas of concern: job creation, economic development, and educational opportunities. But the Speech from the Throne contained an even more important message, what I perceive to be the single most important message announced in this Chamber in over a decade. I am of course referring to the message that on February 16 the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Janice MacKinnon, will introduce . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I just want to remind the member that we do not refer to other members by name, but by their title or by their constituency. Carry on.

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. She will introduce the first balanced budget since the 1982 election of the Tories. The massive debt burden introduced by the Tories is a burden that will continue to plague the good people of this province for many years to come. It will require the continued good management and development skills that have brought us, after just four years, to this first balanced budget in more than a decade. The elimination of the total provincial deficit is impeded by the more than \$2 million that must be paid each and every day, 365 days a year — over \$2 million a day just to service the inherited Tory debt.

Three times in the last half century, the CCF and NDP governments have come to power facing huge provincial debts. Three times the people of Saskatchewan have been burdened by a Tory or Liberal administration that has devastated this province. Once again through the efforts of a responsible New Democrat government, this province is well on the road to recovery.

This is the fifth session of the twenty-second legislature, and a great deal has changed since I first rose to speak in this Chamber. A great deal of progress has been made, progress that all Saskatchewan people can be proud of.

As mentioned in the throne speech, our population is on the upswing and unemployment is on the decline. Local business sectors are expanding and our health care system is a world leader in health care reform. The outlook for the future is much brighter. The people of Saskatchewan, led by this government, can take full credit for this brighter future. Not only are we in a balanced budget position, but this session will ensure the security of our future through the introduction of the balanced budget Act.

The balanced budget to be presented has resulted in increased worldwide confidence in this province, confidence that is producing major economic recovery for the people of Saskatchewan. Our government has, through good management, with the help of the citizens of this province, produced a remarkable comeback, a comeback resulting in thousands of new jobs, new jobs that produce more income for business and for government, thus assisting in economic recovery of Saskatchewan.

With the deficit under control, we as a government will now tackle the job creation with the same optimism that will enable

us to initiate programs for more employment opportunities, opportunities that will promote economic and social recovery for the people of Saskatchewan. For example, the forest resource management Act will provide for the sustainable management of our forests, thus allowing for a viable lumber industry, therefore providing many long-term jobs in logging and related industries.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan energy strategy, security, and prosperity will be introduced. The strategy identifies a way to help the province economically through responsible production, processing, and transporting of energy.

The Speech from the Throne indicated that net farm income in Saskatchewan reached \$925 million last year. That's the highest figure since 1988. However a major storm cloud looms on the horizon for net farm income with the threatened changes to the method of payment. If the federal government is successful in removing the Crow benefit, Saskatchewan farmers will lose more than \$300 million from that net figure. In other words, 925 million will suddenly drop to less than 625 million.

(2030)

At times we hear the statement: Tory times are tough times. That statement may well be true, but let's not forget that the loss of the Crow's Nest Pass Agreement followed by the Crow benefit was and is being thrust upon us by the federal Liberal government.

In addition, devastating interest rates that ruined many farm families were the direct result of changes to the usury Act by the former Liberal government. It is very clear to Saskatchewan farmers that Jean-Luc Pepin, Lloyd Axworthy, and of course Otto Lang and his trainee, the present Liberal Minister of Agriculture, are not friends of the farmer.

At the present time farmers are receiving a better return from the market-place, but with the continued high interest and input costs, they cannot absorb another \$300 million cut-back as proposed by the removal of the Crow benefit.

We, the Government of Saskatchewan, must strive to prevent further erosion of farm income by the federal Liberals.

On another venue, in the past three years a great deal of progress has been made in the second major step in health care. T.C. Douglas, when introducing Saskatchewan's health care system, saw two steps to produce a world-renowned level of health care services for the people of Saskatchewan. To complete the second step in T.C.'s vision, the present session will see the medical professions Act pass. This Act will accommodate the transfer of employees to the 30 district health boards. The board structure allows local control of the major thrust of health care.

In addition, we are committed to health board elections to be held in the fall of 1995. These elections represent the first time

Saskatchewan people have had the opportunity to directly choose their health care representatives.

In Hafford, in the heart of Redberry constituency, the parkland district has implemented a salary-doctor arrangement that has attracted two doctors to our community, the first time this has happened in over 50 years.

In addition, the home care management for the district has now opened an office in Hafford. Improvements in first response and ambulance service are now on the agenda.

As well I recently took part in the official opening of a beautiful palliative care centre. These kinds of improvements in the delivery of health care are being well received throughout my constituency. I am honoured and pleased to be part of a government that has initiated these changes.

I want to acknowledge the positive contribution made to our health care system by the previous minister of Health, the member from Regina Hillsdale. She will indeed go down in history as one of the great leaders in our proud record of compassionate health care.

I also want to congratulate the new Health minister, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — As I know that he will be successful in completing the health reform in a caring and compassionate manner.

In the area of education, Mr. Speaker, we will be introducing a new program aimed at young people. This program is called JobStart and will soon be announced. The initiative will focus on young people needing training to get a first job and those facing special barriers to employment. Young people are the future of our province, of our world, and we must put in place good programs now to ensure they have a future.

Education is a great concern to many people these days, Mr. Speaker, especially with what the federal Liberals have in store for post-secondary students, outlined in the Liberal document, *Improving Social Security in Canada*. Students could see their tuition costs soar and at the same time see student loans virtually eliminated or nearly impossible for a student to ever pay back. This will be a very sad day when it is too expensive for a young person to be able to attend university or any other post-secondary institution because he or she cannot afford it. It will be a sad day indeed.

It would be really nice to finally see a federal government who places some of the debt burden on those who can actually afford to give a little, like the huge corporations and the rich, who seem to squeeze through available tax loopholes in our federal system. It would be really nice to see, Mr. Speaker, instead of squeezing money out of our poor and our youth.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of our great province. We have seen many remarkable things happen to Saskatchewan in those 90 years. We have seen bumper crops, frost, and famine. We have seen triumph, loss, and defeat. We have seen growth, prosperity, and riches. Throughout all of it, Mr. Speaker, we have seen some of the finest people in all the world living right here in Saskatchewan.

This year as well, Mr. Speaker, we will be hosting the 1995 Grey Cup for the very first time — another first in Saskatchewan — many things to celebrate this year. Ninety years as a province and bringing home the Grey Cup — just two more reasons for Saskatchewan's people to feel optimistic. 1995 will be a great year for us, for the people of the greatest province in Canada. And as we look ahead to our centennial anniversary, the year of 2005, we can all look ahead with much hope and anticipation. We can look at what we've done as a government and as a province over the past three and a half years with much pride and build on that pride. After all it is true that Saskatchewan people do have a lot of pride and now have plenty of reason to show that pride.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wormsbecker: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak in support of the throne speech for the fifth session of the twenty-second legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reflect upon the past three and a half years. As you probably are aware of, I have announced that I will not be contesting the nomination of Weyburn-Big Muddy in the next election. And perhaps I can take a little liberty to reflect upon the events of the past three and a half years.

I remember walking through the main doors for the first time when cabinet was sworn in, and as I walked through those doors I could not help but think of the MLAs who preceded me as MLAs for the constituency of Weyburn, men like T.C. Douglas, Auburn Pepper, and Lorne Hepworth. These men represented their constituents admirably and have done an excellent job, and I was pleased to follow in their footsteps.

And as I entered through those doors on February 6 past, I looked around and saw the guests sitting here on the main floor and also in the gallery, and I could not help but recall the first time I also walked through those main doors, came around and sat right here in this same desk that I'm speaking from. And on that first occasion as I sat down and looked around at all those folks who had elected us, basically representatives of the people of Saskatchewan, I asked myself the question, is this a job I really want?

And the reason I asked the question is because it was a difficult task that was handed to all of us as elected representatives, and the difficult task was to open the books, restore sound fiscal responsibility and management to this province. And I was one

that questioned just whether it could be done in the space of the first term, as we had promised to do.

And as I sat here on February 6 looking around, I said to myself once again, when we undertook this task we undertook it one day at a time, one year at a time, and with a little bit of good luck and darn good management we were able to deliver one year earlier than anticipated.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wormsbecker: — On February 16 next, this coming Thursday, the Minister of Finance will deliver a balanced budget and I must commend her, my cabinet colleagues, and my colleagues here on the government side of the House, for the hard work that has been done over the past years.

I also must commend the people of Saskatchewan for having given us the opportunity to serve them and also for sticking with us during the past three and a half years. There were many challenges that we faced and there are many tasks and difficulties that we also had to face.

Now that I'm retiring, Mr. Speaker, there'll be many things I will perhaps miss and perhaps not miss. For example, I'm not going to miss having to travel 70 miles back and forth to this Legislative Assembly. I don't think I'll miss the cafeteria meals. I assume that I've probably consumed at least 300-plus meals, and notwithstanding that the staff are excellent staff, it's sometimes the gourmet food isn't the same as what my wife cooks for me. And I begin to appreciate more her good cooking and occasionally even a meal that I prepare for myself.

What else won't I miss. Well, the bricks and mortar. The building is beautiful. I recall the first time I entered this Legislative Chamber on a tour looking at the building as a student attending the University of Regina, having been forced to take a fine arts class because I at that time was enrolled in a liberal arts program and one of the prerequisites was a fine arts class. I took art history, and I had to write a paper on the architecture of this building. It is beautiful. At the time I was writing the paper, I didn't really appreciate it that much. I spent several hours sitting out in my vehicle just looking at the architecture from the exterior of the building. But now that I've sat in this Legislative Assembly, I have a different view of things.

Some of the things I will miss, of course, is question period — the energy of this Legislative Assembly. Also I'm certain I will have fond memories, perhaps fond dreams, of you, Mr. Speaker, getting up, calling this House to order. Some of my colleagues say nightmares, but no. These will be fine, fond memories that I will have as I grow old. Some people may say I'm already old.

The other thing that perhaps I will miss most, of course, are the fine individuals that are gathered around here tonight listening to me waxing and waning in my retirement years. There's no doubt that the heart and soul and body of this building is

embodied right here in those of us that are around here, the members that have been elected, the Clerks of the Legislative Assembly, also the pages, and all of the support staff that occupy the corridors of this building — the MAs (ministerial assistant) and secretaries. These are the individuals whom I will miss.

(2045)

And as I leave this Chamber for the last time, I realize that I will become part of the history of the building. My photograph will be perhaps not permanently displayed because I assume at some point in time I may move into a dusty hall, but in any event I will be there for a few years and I have appreciated the time that I have spent here.

Well I'd like to move on now, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps just comment briefly upon the Speech from the Throne. This perhaps can be described as the great Saskatchewan comeback. The Premier has coined this phrase and I think it's applicable and it's appropriate.

And on February 6, as I was walking through this building into this legislative Chamber with my colleagues, I couldn't help but notice the four young students that I brought with me that day as my visitors, two of whom are residents of Weyburn, two of whom are international students, one from Japan and one from Denmark. And these students, they're the individuals who are going to have to pick up the mantle and govern this province in the future. They're the ones whom we basically directed our energy towards in terms of turning this province around. We did it for our children; we did it for our grandchildren.

And I'm proud to say that on February 16 we will have laid that firm foundation upon which we can build for the future — build those surpluses, pay back that accumulated debt of approximately \$16 billion, and at the same time hopefully provide for some modest increases in some of our programs for the people of Saskatchewan, because over the last several years there's no doubt that they did accept the challenge that we presented them with. And that challenge was that they've got to do their part in order to assist us in wrestling this deficit to the ground.

Mr. Speaker, as I reflect upon the past three and a half years, I see that there's a significant improvement in agriculture. The 1994 crop receipts were up more than \$1 billion. That's 43 per cent in comparison to the previous year. And total realized net farm income was up 108 per cent.

At the time we were elected, agriculture was in the doldrums, the international price of commodities, farm commodities that is, was significantly depressed. And I recall one of the first demonstrations out here in front of the legislature dealt with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program). And I recall walking through that crowd of farmers and speaking to them about their frustrations and how they wished that they would be able to obtain their income through the farm gate rather than depend upon subsidies.

And I'm happy to see that the international grain prices for coarse grains, specialty crops, has increased and that agriculture looks more promising today than it did three and a half years ago.

Also, Mr. Speaker, oil sales were up significantly over the past year, 22 per cent. And in the constituency of Weyburn, there is an oil patch, primarily to the east of Weyburn. And the activity that has occurred in the oil patch over the last two years has been significant, and it has added a lot of extra dollars in our economy. All of the motels are full, and even the tavern keepers have indicated that their business is prospering considerably more than in the past. I must commend our government for restructuring the tax royalty structure, and it has significantly resulted in the additional activity that has taken place in the oil patch over the last several years.

Also manufacturing is up. Retail sales are up. Sales of vehicles are up. Pretty well every thing is on the rise including our population. I can recall there were years when our population was declining, and since 1992 it has been steadily increasing, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to looking at the positive economic factors that are signals that our economy is growing, if you also take into account the dependency rates — that is welfare and also individuals on unemployment insurance — we in Saskatchewan rank second to Alberta as the province with the lowest dependency rates. And that is a positive sign that our economy is doing very well.

One of the things that I'm proud of, Mr. Speaker, is the approach that we have taken in terms of presenting our budget. When we introduced our first budget, we introduced a plan. And basically the plan was over a two-year period, indicating to third parties that we funded what they could expect to receive so that the communities, rural municipalities and urban municipalities, could do some planning, that the educational institutions could do some planning, and also that the health boards could do some planning knowing what their funding was going to be.

We also indicated when we put out our budget what the economic forecasts were, what the information was that we relied upon in determining our forecasts. And we received positive reviews from all of the agencies, bond rating agencies, and that has assisted us in basically establishing some credibility, amongst all of the other provinces, in Saskatchewan. And I challenge the other provinces to follow our lead, to put forward a plan in each and every budget year so that the public knows exactly the direction the government is going and also how we intend to get there.

The other significant component of our budget this year, Mr. Speaker, will be jobs and job creation. We will be targeting certain funds towards job creation. And the industries that we would like to target are basically the agricultural industry, in order to help diversification, also targeting agri-biotech, transportation, environment, forestry, mining, tourism, and

information technologies. Our approach is to build upon our God-given strengths and to add value and diversification.

In relating this to my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I can recall just within a couple of months of being elected that I was summoned to a meeting, and it was as a result of the community bond project that our community had initiated. And our community was attempting to attract a business called Advanced Test Technologies to Weyburn and I'm pleased to say that we were successful in obtaining the necessary capital by selling bonds in our community and that this particular industry is now in Weyburn and is operating.

It's initiatives like this where we as government work with our communities in partnership with our communities to develop jobs . . . Perhaps in the past the public were of the opinion that government must create jobs. I'm not of that philosophy and neither is our government. We work in partnerships with communities, with industry.

We're there to provide some of the support, research, development, marketing, to give our residents in the province of Saskatchewan an opportunity to be entrepreneurs, to employ people. Statistics once again show that the majority of jobs are created by businesses with fewer than 50 employees, and we in Saskatchewan must — and I emphasize must — continue to support small business. That is the mainstay of our economy, together with agriculture.

And I'm pleased to say that, as my colleague from Saskatoon has mentioned, that we are developing an ag biotech industry that is recognized as a world leader.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wormsbecker: — Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor, in the Speech from the Throne, stated that there are now nine REDAs (regional economic development authority) in Saskatchewan. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that over the next year that this will multiply by another nine. And hopefully the whole province will be divided into regional economic development associations. And once again, Mr. Speaker, this development of regional economic associations is once again reflective of our commitment as a government to empower communities, to encourage communities to work together in partnership, in order to be competitive and attract businesses as opposed to working against one another.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we will initiate a JobStart program. And this program will assist young people to acquire skills in order to enter the workforce. For example, Mr. Speaker, just last fall Bourgault Industries was in need of additional skilled workers, and we helped to train some workers in order to provide jobs for them. And this is an example, once again, of government working with private business to train the necessary people in order to provide employment for them.

The other thing I would like to comment upon, Mr. Speaker, is our movement to the information highway. Over the past few

weeks I noticed that business is beginning to advertise surfing the Internet. And every household will have the opportunity to link up with this information highway. And there's no doubt that this is the way of the future. Schools are being approached, the service is being offered to the schools in order to get the students familiar with the new technology.

I have four children, Mr. Speaker, three of whom are still in high school and grade school and they're very familiar with computers. And it's this type of technology that we must implement in schools in order to give our children the opportunity to take advantage of the information highway, the Internet, so that they become very familiar with this technology, because most of the jobs that are going to be created in the future will be information-based jobs and these will be the high-paying jobs.

(2100)

So in summary, Mr. Speaker, as I stated, in this fiscal year, in this budget year that is coming up, we will be targeting certain areas, we'll be focusing on economic development and diversification. We will be focusing on REDAs (regional economic development authority) as being the vehicle for providing this development. We'll be focusing on job training, youth employment, building an information society and the information highway, and basically trying to support our industries here in Saskatchewan.

And I'm confident, Mr. Speaker, that in the future Saskatchewan will do very well. Back in 1991 when we were elected, my constituents in Weyburn were hopeful that the new government would be able to turn the economy around. Perhaps they were not very optimistic but they were definitely hopeful.

The thing I noticed today, Mr. Speaker, is that my constituents are very optimistic. They're optimistic that we will be able to provide the necessary training for the young folks, the students, for our children and our grandchildren, and they're optimistic that tomorrow definitely is going to be a brighter day.

So in summary and in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have been given this opportunity to speak tonight. And as I indicated, this probably will be the last session that I will be sitting in this Legislative Assembly, so I would like to extend to my colleagues on both sides of the House the best in the future. I know for those that are going to be retiring that they will continue on with their futures, that they will do very well, and I wish them the best of success.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do is to move adjournment of this debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:04 p.m.