

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
February 22, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present petitions today from the Prelate area and the town — a very small town in my constituency — and the prayer that they offer today reads as such:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program towards double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projects in the province.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And as I've said, from St. Angela's Academy; we have all of the sisters and the priests up there along with all of the community. I think everyone in town must have signed this petition, and I'd be happy to table it on their behalf today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have some petitions pertaining to the same subject that I would like to lay on the Table today, and I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program toward double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projects in the province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these come from across the south of the province, and at this time I'll lay them on the Table.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today from constituents of the Shaunavon constituency. The prayer is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers, and urge the federal government to recognize that gun control and crime control are not synonymous.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition, and the prayer says:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program toward double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds toward capital construction projects in the province.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I have signatures here from Maple Creek, Golden Prairie, and Swift Current.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I too would like to present a petition to the Assembly, and I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program toward double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds toward capital construction projects in the province.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the Maple Creek area, and I so present it.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan petitioning the Assembly to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

And of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to oppose changes to federal legislation regarding firearm ownership.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of questions today. I give notice that I shall on day 18 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Health: (1) how much has been paid this fiscal year to Phoenix Advertising Group by your department; (2) what were the services that were purchased or commissioned; and (3) were all of the services paid for actually received?.

My second set. I give notice that I shall on day 18 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Finance: (1) how much has been paid this fiscal year to Phoenix Advertising Group by your department; (2) what were the services that were purchased or commissioned; and (3) were all of the services paid for actually received?

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have two notice of questions. I give notice that I shall on day 18 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Economic Development: how much has been paid this fiscal year to Phoenix Advertising Group by your department; what were the services that were purchased or commissioned; were all the services paid for actually received?

The second one, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 18 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Provincial Secretary: how much is being paid this fiscal year to Phoenix Advertising Group by your department; what were the services that were purchased or commissioned; and (3) were all the services paid for actually received?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the legislature, two young gentlemen who are seated up in the Speaker's gallery. They, along with three other friends, are here to observe the proceedings today. They most recently attended the convention of the Saskatchewan New Democrats and were very interested in a small-business forum that was held at that convention.

Mr. Michael Curtis is himself a small-business person. He has a business dealing with first-aid technicians. And also Mr. Cory Diemert is here. And I would ask all members to welcome this next generation of strong Saskatchewan citizens to the gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too have guests I'd like to introduce through you and to you to all members of the Assembly. These three young people are sitting with the two gentlemen who were just introduced.

There's Darrick Lutz and Conrad Lutz. Darrick is a student of history at the University of Saskatchewan. They're both from

Saskatoon. And Nikki Hipkin, who is a young woman I know quite well, who is a student of political science at the University of Saskatchewan. She also happens to be president of the Saskatchewan Young Liberals and has done a terrific job around the province.

So if you'd all join with me, please, and warmly welcome these young people today, I'm sure they would be very appreciative.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Record-breaking Balloon Journey

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, today I want to bring to your attention the story of a remarkable journey that concluded right here in our very own province.

Steve Fossett, an American balloonist, made a record-breaking journey across the Pacific and decided to break another record for distance. His amazing trek of 9,300 kilometres shattered the old mark of a thousand kilometres.

And where, Mr. Speaker, did Mr. Fossett choose to end his globe-trotting mastery? Well it was right here in Saskatchewan.

Many people may wonder why he chose the village of Mendham, Saskatchewan. I can think of several reasons why he chose this site. It may have been because of the previous day, Leader was the hot spot in all of Canada. Or perhaps he heard of Scotty, the dinosaur, and wanted to check out the tremendous tourism potential for himself. It also must be because he feared an accident and he heard that Saskatchewan had the best health care system in the world.

But, Mr. Speaker, the real reason Mr. Fossett travelled here: because he knew that our province was the first one to balance its budget and thought there was no better place to land and secure a heavy burden.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Mendham, our newest star. I also hope I won't be blowing too much hot air when I say, in Saskatchewan we're really truly up, up, and away.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past three years, Mr. Speaker, this government has been throwing enough hot air around to drive people out of Saskatchewan, and I'm pleased today to join with the member in congratulating Steve Fossett from Chicago on his landing in Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to see that hot air actually has brought somebody to Saskatchewan instead of driving them all out.

It was in fact into my constituency that this gentleman landed and last night the world record journey across the Pacific from Seoul, South Korea, did end just north of Mendham, Saskatchewan. I understand that one of the first things that he

asked for was a Canadian beer. And the second thing that he's reported to have said was that, boy, have you guys ever got high taxes up here.

I've always maintained that Canadian beer was better than American beer, but I've never seen anybody go to quite this much trouble to get one. We of course hope that he will come back again.

But I would like to congratulate, Mr. Speaker, Steve Fossett on his remarkable journey. I'd like to congratulate the people from Mendham for giving him the royal Canadian welcome that he got. And congratulations. Welcome to Mendham. Welcome to Saskatchewan and to Canada and to my riding. Come again any time. There's another beer where that one came from.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Yorkton Timmy's Snowarama

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to respond on an amazing fund-raising event that was held this past weekend in Yorkton.

Mr. Speaker, the Yorkton Timmy's Snowarama, which began 18 years ago, raises money each year for Camp Easter Seal. The money is used to send young people from across the province to summer camp. This year the Yorkton Snowmobile Club had 400 snow riders. Mr. Gibert Hryski was the oldest at 66 years, and Mr. Devon Hrywikiw was the youngest. Participants were mostly from the local area; however four riders travelled all the way from Creighton, 300 miles by snow machine, to participate.

The trail is 140 kilometres long, is well signed and maintained, and supervised at all times. All vehicles are licensed, and once again this year's event was incident free.

Eighteen years ago, the Yorkton Snowmobile Club raised \$8,000. Mr. Speaker, the Yorkton Timmy's Snowarama this year raised \$60,000, with the highest single pledge of \$2,300. Mr. Speaker, this is an outstanding accomplishment by the Yorkton Snowmobile Club. The \$60,000 they raised this year is not only the highest amount ever raised anywhere in the province; it is more than was raised in Regina and Saskatoon this year collectively.

Congratulations to the event organizer, Mr. Barry Bradshaw, and the Yorkton Snowmobile Club for leading the way to ensuring that yet again memorable experiences for Saskatchewan youth can be enjoyed at Camp Easter Seal. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Boy Saves RCMP Member

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, a young man from Buffalo Narrows has recently acquired the status of hero after saving the

life of an RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) constable in north-western Saskatchewan.

On the night of January 30, 15-year-old Murray Clarke was working as a gas attendant at a service station when he heard cries for help.

He dropped what he was doing and ran towards the call for help while his uncle drove his car in the same direction so he could point his headlights towards the constable whose snowmobile had gone through the ice. His Uncle Max tied together two extension cords and about 25 feet of rope. He then tied it around Murray who ventured onto the ice.

After several tries the RCMP constable was able to hold onto the rope; Murray pulled him to safety. The constable suffered no injuries in this mishap other than a minor case of hypothermia.

Mr. Speaker, the circumstances of this accident could have turned out a lot different if it wasn't for the quick reaction and courage displayed by Murray Clarke and his uncle. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Lotteries Winsday

Mr. Carlson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this Assembly, the Premier said that in Saskatchewan we strive to achieve a balance between the various competing and legitimate needs of our society. One of those needs, the primary one of course, is health care.

But also for a society to be alive, we have to have a vibrant quality of life, to be able to recognize its own character, its needs, and an active and varied culture, recreational and artistic presence. And those activities need to be funded.

For over 20 years Saskatchewan Lotteries proceeds have been used to support activities for people of every age and ability. There is no system like it in Canada, maybe even in the entire world.

Today over 12,000 community groups all over the province receive funds from Saskatchewan Lotteries including the Saskatchewan Writers Guild, the Girl Guides, recreational centres, seniors' aerobics, art workshops. The list is endless.

Mr. Speaker, today is Winsday. In recognition of the unique contribution to our community made by Saskatchewan Lotteries, everyone who purchases lottery tickets will receive a button to show they support culture and recreation. When you buy a ticket, you have the chance to win a lot of money, to give to Mr. Martin. And we can all dream, Mr. Speaker.

But what we are actually doing is showing our confidence in the value of distinct Saskatchewan life, the definition of which comes from the way we express ourselves through our art and recreation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Beechy Pig Farm

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you to join me today to congratulate the Beechy community for the establishment of a new, diversified agricultural operation which will be producing economic benefits in my riding.

It's a new 600-sow, farrow-to-finish pig operation unit located south-west of Beechy, Saskatchewan. This energetic venture is a good example to follow for other communities hoping to establish similar projects in their areas.

Beechy Pig is owned jointly by Beechy Stock Farm Ltd., which is the general partner, and a group of other local investors who are the limited partners. These people have invested at least \$5,000 each into this 2 to \$3 million project — further proof of the optimism about agricultural diversification which has taken hold in my constituency and throughout rural Saskatchewan.

This operation near Beechy consists of about 64,000 square feet of buildings, including breeding, gestation, farrowing, weaning and grower barns, manure storage, as well as offices and a feed mill. This facility will produce 13,000 pigs per year in a high-health environment, using superior breeding stock.

Mr. Speaker, there are many benefits arising from this pig production operation. It has created 30 to 40 new jobs during the construction phase. It will use about 3,600 tonnes of feed or about 150,000 bushels per year, providing a significant new local market for these grains.

Construction of the unit has led to substantial spin-off benefits to community businesses. The operation will employ five full-time employees as it also creates significant indirect employment in the local economy.

I want to congratulate the community and the investors of this new business and wish them all the best.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Surgery Waiting-lists

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, although you claim your health reform is better than ever and we should be proud, every day examples are brought forward that prove otherwise.

Can you confirm that even though the waiting-list for cataract surgery averages 17 months, that you have placed caps on the number of cataract surgeries that can be performed in our province; and that as a result of that cap, cataract surgeries in

Saskatchewan were closed for two weeks in December and are presently closed from February 20 to March 6? Will you confirm this, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I will not and I cannot confirm those figures. Mr. Speaker, we've known in question periods in the past, as we discuss them and debate some of the health issues, that members of the opposition have made some claims in the House and that, upon research and evaluation, the claims are not always entirely accurate.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm what the member brings to the House this afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, we trust that you will be taking a real serious look at your department, so that you know what is going on. We have been receiving calls from concerned patients who are on the waiting-list for cataract surgery in this province.

In fact, an Emil Korizone has already waited 18 months before being placed on the emergency list. Even on the emergency list, Mr. Minister, he was told to expect a three- to four-month additional wait for surgery. Mr. Minister, patients have phoned your office, your department, and the Saskatoon Health District Board, and have been told that if they didn't want to wait they could get their contract surgery performed by Dr. Gimbel.

Mr. Minister, if Saskatchewan's health system is so superior, why are your officials referring patients to Calgary for cataract surgery?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, obviously I will take what information the member's bringing in and laying it on the floor of the legislature today, and we'll find out the facts of the matter.

Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. I think it is widely known that when we're talking about waiting-lists for cataract surgery, and indeed for some other surgical procedures, those waiting-lists will vary, community by community and specialist by specialist. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, a certain specialist may have a long client list and therefore will have a long waiting-list. Other specialists performing the very same surgery, the very same speciality, may indeed have a much shorter list, Mr. Speaker. That's the way it is; that's the way it has been.

I am fully aware that both the Saskatoon District Board and the Regina District Board, where most of these speciality surgeries will be performed, both boards are taking the matter of waiting-lists very seriously and taking steps, as they are able, to lessen the length of wait as much as we possibly can.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm sure Mr. Korizone is going to be happy to hear your assertion about the long waiting-lists. The fact is, Mr. Minister, we all know; yes, there are waiting-lists and that health is under a severe problem in the province

We're also talking about caps — caps that are encouraging even longer waiting-lists. Two Saskatchewan doctors, Dr. Underhill and Dr. Blackwell, opened a badly needed eye clinic in Saskatoon to perform cataract surgery. In fact to address this waiting-list problem. You shut them down after four days.

Mr. Minister, this clinic would be employing nurses that have been laid off because of your cut-backs, they would be providing necessary cataract surgeries for hundreds of Saskatchewan people, and they would be lessening the waiting-list drastically for other patients waiting for the surgery.

Question, Mr. Minister: how can you possibly justify shutting this clinic down when Saskatchewan people are waiting years for this necessary surgery or being told to head to Alberta?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member through his question takes us into what is perhaps one of the most fundamental debates in health care delivery in our province and across Canada. Obviously what the member opposite and members of his party are promoting here is a two-tiered system, a system of private clinics for those who can afford and a public system for those who may not be able to afford.

And, Mr. Speaker, in this province, the people of our province, and in this government, this government has said we fully support universally accessible, publicly funded medicare so that we are not interested, Mr. Speaker, in any sort of two-tier medicine for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, it's unfortunate that you talk about a two-tiered system because that's exactly what we have in this province already. And you've created it.

Mr. Minister, for a good example, one patient has been more persistent than others. This patient phoned the Premier's office for answers. Guess what? He was told by one of the assistants in the Premier's office that he could go to Dr. Gimbel's eye clinic in Calgary. But did that happen? Instead, a phone call was made from the Premier's office and suddenly this patient was bumped in front of all the others on the waiting-list, Mr. Minister.

Obviously we already have a two-tiered health care system in this province. One where patients wait on a very long waiting-list, and the other where the Premier bumps some patients in front of others.

Mr. Minister, instead of shutting eye clinics down in

Saskatchewan, instead of sending Saskatchewan patients to Alberta, instead of bumping your preferred patients up the list, why won't you allow eye clinics to open in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear to the member, very clear to members of this House, and very clear to the public, what that member has just said by way of accusation — that friends may in fact be bumped — is simply and literally not true, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, either the member is being misinformed, and I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, under the administration of this Minister of Health, the former minister of Health, under the administration of this government, that kind of procedure is simply not true.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Proposed Tax on Lotteries

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is directed to one of the ministers, and I'm willing to gamble that it may be the Minister of Finance that gets up to answer this gambling question this time.

But in either case, Madam Minister, as you know, the federal Liberal government is considering taxing lottery winnings in its upcoming budget. I submit to you, Madam Minister, that this would have a devastating effect on many Saskatchewan charities, particularly those that are lotteries with merchandise prizes. For example, like the hospital foundation, or the Children's Wish Foundation. Many of these charities, Madam Minister, are already having to compete with your government VLTs (video lottery terminal).

Now in addition to that, a further attack by the federal Liberals is, quite frankly, going to be very devastating. Madam Minister, could you tell this Assembly what your government is doing to oppose this tax?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for the question. I made it clear to Mr. Martin in our meeting last week — the Finance ministers' meeting — that we did not support the idea of a tax on lotteries. We saw it as a tax on volunteerism, a tax on charities and other groups that do very worthwhile work in our community. And we believe that in the long term the results would only be negative. So we have made that point, we have supported the charities, and we would oppose a tax of that kind.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And another twofold question, I suppose, to the same minister. Madam Minister, this plan was endorsed — I read here — last

year by a parliamentary committee, that all winnings over \$500 would be taxed in varying amounts. So question number one to you on this two-part question is: is it your understanding that this is an income tax on an income-tax basis, or is it a specific tax based entirely on the winnings themselves — nothing to do with the total amount of income of that individual?

And, Madam Minister, while you're on your feet then, would you commit yourself that regardless of the answer to my first question, that you will commit your government, that your voracious appetite for gambling dollars will not be satiated on the backs of Saskatchewan people in addition to those things that the federal government is planning?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I note that the parliamentary committee did support this tax on lotteries. I note the same parliamentary committee said that transfers to the provinces should not be cut. I'm not sure the parliamentary committee is going to be taking that seriously. I think you really need to be directing your questions to the Liberal Party here, asking them what they have done with respect to saying to the federal government what they should be doing about transfers, and what they should be doing about taxes on lotteries.

What I've said to the federal minister publicly and privately is this: they simply have no mandate to be increasing taxes. We were elected in 1991 to clean up the financial mess. They were elected to eliminate the GST (goods and services tax). They have not followed the advice of provinces that have said consistently, review the tax system, overhaul it. Reform it. Lay everything on the table. They haven't done that. They have no mandate to increase taxes so I would ask you to address your questions to your Liberal colleagues as to what the counterparts in Ottawa are going to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question to you, Madam Minister, and that is this: that you have traded off to farming individuals in this province with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) to the federal government; have you also made a deal that you're going to trade off something on the lottery situation with the federal government as well so that this offloading will not occur? That is a very simple question, Madam Minister, and then I will turn it over to the Liberal leader to answer your question.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, we have made no deals at all with the federal government. But I would ask that . . . members, there is no deal of any kind. I want to ask the members opposite to start thinking about what might happen to agriculture in this province with the new Liberal budget, and I would . . .

An Hon. Member: — You've already done it.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well I'll tell you, if you think we've

done anything to agriculture, you wait until next Monday.

I would ask the members opposite to join with us and other farm groups, to begin to ask our colleagues in this legislature, are they Liberals or are they not Liberals? Will they meet the challenge in terms of agriculture? And what about the other challenge that we have given to Mr. Martin? We said, Mr. Martin, begin at the top. Start by eliminating the Senate. That would be a symbolic cut that the average Canadian could identify with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Income Tax Revenues

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The only reliable way to eliminate the debt and fund the programs of the future is through thousands more taxpayers and fairer tax levels. The temporary associate minister of Finance disagrees, Mr. Speaker. Last week he told this Assembly and I quote: Income tax revenues have absolutely nothing to do with the number of jobs.

Despite the government's claims that there are more jobs, the NDP (New Democratic Party) continues to lower and to miss its income tax targets every year.

My question to the Finance Minister: do you support the statement of last week's associate minister of Finance that income tax revenues have absolutely nothing to do with the number of jobs in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — . . . question from the Liberal member opposite. I would point out that who does the income tax estimates are her colleagues in Ottawa, so you may want to ask them why they have been off for so many years.

But I'm glad the Liberal member is up because I'll be interested as we proceed here to see which Liberal member I have. Do I have the Liberal member from the last session who added \$300 million to the deficit by her big spending practices in the last session, or do I have the Liberal member of this session who's talking about reducing the cost of government? Will the real Liberal member stand up? We cannot, in this province, have flavour-of-the-month finances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what this particular minister and all the others, particular the Premier, are so afraid of that they have to create myths instead of answering questions in this legislature. If there's any confusion in this House, Mr. Speaker, it's the Premier of the province. At least I'm not confused about what party I belong to.

Mr. Speaker, the reason the NDP will not deliver part two of their jobs plan any better than they did part one is because they're moving Saskatchewan in entirely the opposite direction

from the rest of the provinces with growing economies.

In other words, other provinces know that more jobs and more taxpayers and therefore lower taxes are the key to long-term debt reduction. This NDP government keeps decreasing the amount of money it expects to get from income tax and doesn't even meet those lower targets.

New Brunswick presented a budget yesterday, and I quote: New Brunswick is projecting an increase of more than \$100 million in personal income tax because more people are working than ever before.

My question to the Minister of Finance: can the Finance minister explain why her budget indicates that the NDP plan will not generate any growth at all in income tax but yet you expect to create jobs?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite loves to use New Brunswick as an example. So do I. Let's look at some of the statistics about New Brunswick. Last year our retail sales increased by over 9 per cent. What about New Brunswick? One of the few provinces to have a decrease in retail sales. Our unemployment rates hover around 7 to 8 per cent — usually lower than that, usually at the low end. What about New Brunswick's? Twelve and a half per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member doesn't like our new plan for the province. I'm not surprised. But she has a record; let's hear what she said about our first plan.

Mr. Speaker, parts of this budget may look good on paper, but it's not going to happen in the real world. The tax revenues are not going to be there. All you have to do is look at the facts. This budget is based on some very, very major leaps of faith. It has asked people to accept the word of politicians that these numbers will be met.

We put out a plan. We achieved our first target. She didn't believe us then; I'm not surprised she doesn't believe us now. But the people of Saskatchewan believe us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's most interesting that this Finance minister says that she has a plan and that they actually reached their taxation targets. You missed your income tax revenue targets every single year, Madam Minister. Read your own books.

If you take out the budget items that had absolutely nothing to do with any planning whatsoever — take out the \$250 million in resource windfalls; take out the increased transfer payments, Madam Minister; take out the money from the GRIP, and let's see how well your government really did in its planning.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that promised economic development. They promised jobs. They promised the people a

future. When you take away all the luck they've had, the government was unable to do what other provinces have done.

My question to the Premier: Mr. Premier, in 1991 you said you had a plan for job creation but your Finance minister planned for less income tax revenue than the year before. This year you claimed thousands and thousands of new jobs, but even after a \$17 million rebate factored in, you still don't have new taxpayers contributing to income tax. What kind of jobs do you claim to be creating if you have no new income taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite to listen to the answer of the first time. I said it's the federal government that does the income tax estimates for the province. Why does she know better than Wood Gundy, Nesbitt Burns, saying we have done an excellent job of meeting our targets?

But the Liberal member opposite has a record. And this is what she said a few weeks ago at SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association). She wants a government that would do this: that will commit to real targets; that will tell you in advance how we will reach them; how long it will take; and most importantly, explain clearly the way in which you or anyone interested can measure our progress.

There are some pivotal places in the North American continent that are doing this. Yes, member opposite, right here in Saskatchewan. Will she join us and tell the people of Saskatchewan that we have come up with exactly the kind of plan that she has been asking for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, it is most interesting what Nesbitt Burns says, and I think you should read the most latest publication.

Mr. Speaker, the future of Saskatchewan depends entirely on having more people — more taxpayers and more young people especially. On television on Sunday night, the Premier told people that out-migration had stopped, that young people were no longer leaving Saskatchewan. And the direct quote is: young people are no longer leaving Saskatchewan. End of quote.

Yesterday the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) economics professor, Eric Howe, said, and I quote: the lack of jobs creates an exodus of young people. Right now, people are Saskatchewan's greatest export. To get zero out-migration we'd have to see an increase of some 50,000 jobs. The out-migration will increase every year. End of quote.

My question to the Premier: Sir, there is no evidence whatsoever to support that young people have stopped leaving Saskatchewan. What evidence can you table today to support your comment that young people are no longer leaving, that we aren't losing those potential taxpayers from our province, the 4,000 young taxpayers who have left since you came into

power?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I think that this question says a lot about the mentality of the Liberal Party. They go through the newspapers today. Let's tell people what they passed over.

"Sask. budget encourages bond market" — that wouldn't be a good story. "Twinpak likes Regina atmosphere" — that wouldn't be a good story. "Canadian airlines optimistic" — terrible story. "Air Canada will be fuelling up" — no good for them. "Brokerage firm impressed." "Saskatchewan budget on the right track."

But luckily for the Liberals there was this one story, economic growth to stall, in which somebody goes down to Midtown Plaza — this isn't the Conference Board of Canada — and he says, by the way, I think people are still leaving this province. He needs to update his lecture notes. They're coming in; they're not leaving.

And then he has wonderful logic. He says in 1993 when taxes were going up in the province, the province grew more than Alberta. Now in 1995 when taxes are going down, it's clear to him that the province will decline in terms of growth.

This says legions about the Liberal Party. What they're looking for is gloom and doom, the bad news bears. And they're confused. All they care about is the bottom line: a bad-news story. They don't care about the logic. I'll tell you the people of Saskatchewan are not going to fall for this kind of logic.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Polling

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for polling, the Provincial Secretary. Mr. Minister, the other day you said that your government does not pay for political preference polling, and you went on to say, and I quote: if somebody else has paid for them, that would not be something we would be knowledgeable of.

Mr. Minister, I have a copy of the contract between yourself — the Provincial Secretary — and CanWest. The contract says:

The consultant may add up to four questions provided the information obtained is not made available to any other party without prior approval of the province.

That, Mr. Minister, means that you have the right of first refusal. That means in anybody's language that you own the poll.

Mr. Minister, why did you say that you have no knowledge of somebody else adding questions on a government survey? Don't you know what's in your own contract?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the member from Morse, to his question. And I want to say again that, as the pollster himself has said — and that has been in the press — that the pollster, as any other pollster, will do an omnibus poll on which they will ask a series of questions. Some of the questions on the poll will be purchased by some people, as the Government of Saskatchewan does.

And we make those public every three months for the benefit of the public, the media, and the members of this House, and that's been done. And in April, which will be the next three-month cycle, all of the polling for which the Government of Saskatchewan paid for will be made public again.

But in an omnibus poll, pollsters will ask other questions as well, as this pollster has done and as every other pollster does, and they will use those to sell to whoever might be interested — because they're in the business of doing so — to receive that kind of information.

That is the status of this poll and there is very clearly . . . as I said before, the only questions which the government pays for are those which we table for the public and for the legislature and for the media every three months.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, you have the right of first refusal, and it's pretty hard to believe that CanWest, the company that does most of your government's polling, would add on four blatantly political questions for their own internal use. It seems more likely that these questions are added on as a result of a favour to a good customer, namely your government.

Questions like: if a federal election was called, who would you vote for? Questions like: who did you vote for in the last provincial election? Questions like: who would you vote for if an election was called today?

Mr. Minister, isn't it the case that you can ask CanWest to tag these questions on in return for small businesses that you do with them? Isn't this simply a case of your government using taxpayers' money for political polling, something you specifically promised not to do, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — The only part of the question, Mr. Speaker, that is accurate is that the government specifically promised not to use government revenues to pay for polling which was political polling. And that's why the Government of Saskatchewan as it is today, since 1991 of November, does not do that any more, as was done by the former administration.

The polling, Mr. Speaker, that the pollster does . . . He has made that clear, — it's has been reporting in the press — that the polling that he does, other than what has been asked by the government, is his business, it's the polling firm's business, it's available for whatever purposes somebody may want to

purchase it for. The government has not paid for any of that nor does the government have any interest in any of that because the New Democratic Party, as is the appropriate way to do it, does its own polling and paid for by the New Democratic Party and the people who contribute to that party. And I might say there are tens of thousands of them in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 19 — An Act to amend The Business Corporations Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Business Corporations Act.

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

Bill No. 20 — An Act to amend The Co-operatives Act, 1989

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Co-operatives Act, 1989.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to make my address in reply to the budget before the members of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan this afternoon.

Managing precious tax dollars is a very serious and important responsibility for all elected members from all parties. And it is an honour for me to bring the Liberal perspective to these discussions for consideration by members of the government and the official opposition.

Before I begin today, I want to spend a few moments in discussion of process versus outcome. In layman's terms it's called having more than one way to skin a cat. In politics it all boils down to one party might achieve the same results as another by using a different approach; in other words, employing a different philosophy.

This is important because it forms the basis of the fundamental discussion taking place all over Saskatchewan with respect to the provincial budget. The Finance minister is correct. There are few people who would disagree with the need to balance the budget. In actual fact the government was given little choice in the matter, because obtaining credit is entirely contingent on the deficit getting under control.

Liberals have had a consistent history of fiscal responsibility in Saskatchewan and we campaigned on our commitment to balanced budgets and reduce the debt. Thus the government members opposite wonder what possible disagreement there could be over this budget.

Mr. Speaker, there is considerable disagreement. Disagreement about what constitutes a sustainable approach to balanced budgets and to long-term fiscal success. The fundamental disagreement centres on whether the government has set targets that are first sustainable, and second, in the best interest of the long-term economic health of the province.

The debate over this budget is not just a debate about the 1995-1996 fiscal year. It becomes a debate about the future. The debate over this budget is not about whether it is a good thing that the government came into enough money to balance the budget once; it is a debate about whether they have been credible in their planning and having things happen according to that particular plan.

For example, when this government announced in 1992-93 in its budget, it implied that it had a plan to raise \$1.14 billion in income tax. Assuming that there was a plan, then the policies and the economic measures the government undertook should have produced the desired results. But when the government missed the planned income tax target by \$65 million, it raised questions about the credibility of their plan, the effectiveness of their policies. It raised questions about why that particular plan failed.

Should we ask if they had a bad year in predicting income tax? Should we ask if they failed to create the jobs they predicted? Should we simply be asking if the taxation policies of the government, the cost of utilities, the changes to labour law, had an effect on investment and job creation? Well I think those are fair questions to raise.

If this government is going to make predictions, we must assume their predictions take into account the overall climate created by the government itself. The government cannot be blamed for falling short of its predictions because of unforeseen changes to weather or world markets or interest rates. If, however, the provincial government simply fails to deliver what it says it will deliver, then people have a right to hold the government accountable to explain the deficiencies of its own plan that caused its plan to fail.

But the NDP has not hit that critical income tax target once. Not once since taking office in 1991. And because of that, we can only assume that their own plan did not work.

It is a commonly held belief that past behaviour is a good indicator of how a person or a group of people will behave in similar circumstances in the future. Applying this theory then, we have evidence from the past with Liberal governments in Saskatchewan that they have consistently demonstrated fiscal responsibility. Therefore people have good reason to expect similar behaviour from a future Saskatchewan Liberal government.

The Conservatives have shown what they will do or say or spend. And I think that their record stands on its own — that they are a government that perhaps . . . or people in government that one should not trust to run the fiscal affairs of the province.

The NDP have provided irrefutable evidence that they will spend every dime they can wring from the taxpaying public regardless of the consequences. This budget is consistent with their spending legacy, with 18 out of 28 departments with increased expenditures this year yet again.

When they were elected, the NDP wanted everyone to believe that they were a new and a different kind of government. This government rode into power on a wave of moral outrage against the Conservatives.

The \$14 billion debt was created by 20 years of big-spending government, not just the Tories, but the New Democrats before them, Mr. Speaker. And it was many of those New Democrats of the 1970s who still sit in the front benches who grew big government, who continually urged the Conservative government to spend, spend, and even spend more in the 1980s.

So the Premier painted only half the picture on Sunday when he absolved himself and his NDP colleagues of the 1970s and 1980s from responsibility for Saskatchewan's debt. The Conservatives spent us, yes, into billions of dollars of debt, but the NDP kept up a daily barrage of requests for increased spending on this program or that program for the entire time the Conservatives were in power. And they got into one bidding war after another on the election trail, particularly in 1986.

The Premier spent a lot of money on television time last Sunday, Mr. Speaker. He spent that time to defend his record. Today I want to give people a different perspective, backed up by the facts as they are written in the government's own *Estimates* documents over the past two and three years.

Let's talk about the provincial government's track record on meeting targets. What has been the impact of this Premier's policies on creating a climate that we need for stable economic futures?

In 1993 the government had a great deal of confidence in its ability to create jobs, to create economic growth. They had put forward the *Partnership for Renewal* a year earlier, and the minister was proclaiming that new companies, 700 new companies, were going to come here and create jobs. The 1993 budget produced an \$8 million increase in income tax from new taxpayers.

The budget planned to make \$43 million more in corporate tax revenue from those new companies that were going to rush into Saskatchewan. So if the plan was working, the money should have come, Mr. Speaker; it should have come from the very places that they planned for it to come from.

But let's look at the 1994 budget. We see further evidence that the plan didn't work the way that it was supposed to. The money wasn't coming in the way the NDP plan promised, so people had to pay for the failure of the NDP plan to create jobs and new taxpayers.

The government had to achieve its predicted outcome, so they did the following: they raised utility rates, they expanded gambling, they jacked up the sales tax and fuel tax and every other tax, hoping that people would only look at the bottom line, the projected deficit.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the NDP still couldn't do what they planned to do: to create an environment for more jobs and more companies to come into our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members of the government have never been told this side of the story. So let's document the evidence for them, of how badly the plan is really going for this NDP government. It's just astonishing to me that the members of the government have so little interest that they won't go and do their own research. They just take what's given to them verbatim, and then go forth and spew it out, like people who have been programed instead of free-thinking individuals. In 1994-95 they thought they were creating jobs, Mr. Speaker. The minister claims they were creating jobs, but let's look at the real evidence.

People who have jobs pay income tax. If there were more jobs it stands to reason there would be more income tax. But was there? No, sir, there was not. The plan was not unfolding as it ought to. The government had high hopes for 1994-95, that their income tax would be \$1.1 billion. They had missed their target by \$64 million from the previous year, Mr. Speaker. So they lowered it. They lowered it because they knew their *Partnership for Renewal* strategy wasn't working. But even the lower target evaded them.

The NDP missed again. Another year, another miss. They estimated \$1.1 billion in income tax and missed again — this time by \$32 million. The jobs they planned just didn't happen.

The government also had a plan to collect more corporate tax revenue. It was part of the Economic Development minister's plan to attract new companies and to create thousands of jobs. But that isn't really what happened because the plan didn't work, Mr. Speaker.

The resource boom took more capital tax and corporate tax from mining and resource companies who had no choice at all but to stay and pay. You can't pick up a mine and move it somewhere else, Mr. Speaker. The upsurge in prices meant the companies that were here paid more in taxes and royalties but

overall, overall, you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? In this province we lost 1,331 employers since 1991.

There is no evidence, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP plan to attract new companies or create new jobs really worked. Last week the NDP got another chance — they had another budget. This year, after three years of failing to hit the targets that would convince us that their plan for the economy was working, the NDP failed again. The 1995-96 income tax targets are what? They're even lower, Mr. Speaker. They're even lower than last year. Despite all the new jobs the NDP claim to have created, there does not seem to be more people creating more income tax revenue — the fairest tax of all. Everyone is paying fuel tax, utility tax, gambling tax, but the government has no plans to collect income tax from all of these new taxpayers they claim to have created. Why is that?

Could it be that they don't really believe there are new jobs or new taxpayers? Do they believe that themselves? Could it be that the NDP has no real confidence in their plan either? I think, Mr. Speaker, that this must be the case, because on page 32 of the budget address booklet, the Finance minister tells us that the NDP now plan to create — and I emphasize this number, Mr. Speaker — only 12,000 jobs by 1998, even though their *Partnership for Renewal* plan plans to create 30,000 jobs.

(1430)

Personally I think Saskatchewan should have higher targets, that we should be stretching our limits and doing the things that will grow our economy. But it seems the NDP have accepted the fact that their plan for economic renewal is not working. And what's even more astonishing, they actually support the fact by their own numbers that it's not likely to even work in the future.

That is where we are today, Mr. Speaker, with the NDP and what it calls its plan for the future. So the questions remain about whether this budget will be the desired results according to a plan any better than the last ones have. Will it have the desired results?

Not one year have they met their so-called forecasted results. Will the actions being taken by the government, through its plan and through its policies and its budget, have a long-term positive effect on society, on our economy? Or is it all that matters that balancing one pre-election budget and then crossing our fingers for the future, is that simply good enough? I think not, Mr. Speaker.

Is the NDP content to balance the budget with a few golden eggs in gambling, a few golden eggs in resource windfalls, even if their tax policies and labour policies kill the goose that lays those eggs in the process? Let's take a closer look at how the 1994-95 budget was balanced just to see if there are answers to those particular questions that I've just posed.

The budget of this fiscal year, 1994-95, will be balanced because the royalties from oil poured in at \$249 million more

than they anticipated in their own estimates. Potash raked in an extra \$29 million. And the extra money from coal revenues was enough for the Premier to give his whole office a pay raise. The NDP got lucky, lucky beyond their wildest dreams, never mind their plans. That is a good thing. It is a lucky thing. It is especially lucky for the people of this province that there was some luck, and it wasn't left up to them. But it was not part of their plan.

That means government should take no credit, nor should they count on this good luck to continue for the future. If everything had gone according to the NDP plans, the picture would have looked quite different. If the NDP had not struck oil, they would be standing in this House today, trying to explain why their policies failed to create more taxpayers to share the burden.

Oil revenues weren't the only thing that covered up the NDP's bad planning. They got more — not less — more money from Canada Assistance Plan than they had planned on. And they got more money from established programs financing than they had planned for. They of course never give credit where credit's due on that, Mr. Speaker.

So while the members opposite like to rant and rave about Ottawa, they remain pretty darn silent when it comes to the extra kicker that they got for these programs. They planned on an extra \$30 million from equalization payments too. But the Finance minister can surely explain to you just how she liked to explain to the minister of Macklin, that increased economic activity like higher oil prices upsets the NDP plans to capture federal welfare payments — just like reducing the sales tax gets the economy all stimulated and we lose money from Ottawa.

The budget of 1994-95, the current budget, and the budgets for the next three years, they claim will be balanced in part because of the federal government, because the federal government has given to Saskatchewan more revenue in the short term. We don't hear the Finance minister saying that in this House, Mr. Speaker.

What this budget does not acknowledge is that Saskatchewan has had fair warning about the trend for future transfer payments. Ottawa has told provincial governments what to expect down the road. That is a responsible thing to do. Knowing that transfer payments were guaranteed for five years makes it more important than ever that we abandon the welfare mentality indicative of this particular government. Knowing that we cannot rely on hand-outs for ever should encourage this government to create real growth and an economy that is not hamstrung by transfer payments or boom-and-bust resource cycles, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing the government doesn't like to talk too much about are revenues from video lottery terminals — interesting how much it was missing from this particular budget, Mr. Speaker. The budget of this fiscal year, 1994-95, will be balanced because this government will have earned \$90 million from gambling revenues. This was money that emerged from an

activity that was not planned well by the government. Anyone engaged in this, anyone, lays claim that this was one of the most incompetent undertakings in the province's history.

It is an activity that is happening without the consent of the people of Saskatchewan, an activity which will have effects that the government never even thought to predict or to measure adequately. VLT machines take money away from where it can do the most good — the pockets of the people of Saskatchewan, local economies — and then to take it away and put it into one of the most inefficient places: government coffers.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, communities have no way of really getting this money back into their local economies. The other problem is that once the government becomes addicted to this kind of revenue, it will never learn to do without it.

The enormous cash cow has had an extremely negative effect on the communities of this province and her people. Moreover it is a policy, this gambling policy, which has blind-sided the electorate and has eroded the foundations of charities that the minister so discussed today as if she had some concern, concern for charities in this province when they raised the licence fee to charities in Saskatchewan by 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Only after recognizing that charity after charity and non-profit organization after non-profit organization were having to close their own doors did they decide to give them some of that money back which nobody has even seen yet to date.

Eroded the foundations of charities -- a disgraceful legacy, Mr. Speaker; eroded communities and local economies to the point where some of them may not ever recover. At the same time this government now has \$90 million more to spend, more to spend than it would be able to if the revenue was not there. Thus gambling has made it easy, easy for government to avoid closer examination of its own spending, and that's disgusting.

VLT money has allowed the government to bring its revenue levels up to meet its spending habits rather than getting spending down to a level where people could afford it and sustain it through the traditional tax base.

The budget of this fiscal year will be balanced in part as well because the provincial government has not returned all the GRIP surplus to the people who actually paid for it. Again an assumption by the NDP that it can do things better with people's money than they can, has driven their decision to balance the books by taking more cash into the government coffers rather than spending less.

As part of this change in attitude, government must redefine its role. It must become smaller; it must become less expensive; it must become less intrusive. But the NDP will never — and I repeat never — accept that philosophy. The basic problem with the NDP approach is that government spending always expands to absorb the amount of money available.

There's proof positive of this in the era of the 1970s that they love to proclaim as the era, the golden era of Saskatchewan,

where similar economic circumstances existed in the province when we talk about oil and gas prices, and potash and uranium, and oilseeds and grains in the province of Saskatchewan.

The NDP took office in June of 1971 from a Liberal government which was delivering services to approximately 1 million people in Saskatchewan. The Liberals were doing that job, Mr. Speaker, for approximately \$463 per person in our province, because that was the amount of money that government was raising, raising from a traditional tax base during tough, recessionary times.

When the NDP were elected, Mr. Speaker, the economy entered this natural cycle of high resource prices experienced all across the prairies. By the time that NDP government had left office they were spending six times what the Liberals had spent, and were raking in six times the revenues from the good times in the province; the things over which they had no control. The only thing over which they had control was their own spending, and they spent every dime.

One can only imagine what things would have been like if the NDP had resisted the urge to spend every dime during that booming economy and what it generated. And between the Conservative's irresponsible management and the constant urgings of the New Democrats to spend more all through the 1980s, we now have the biggest, most expensive government in the history of Saskatchewan. What a marvellous legacy for the people of our province. The largest, most expensive, and the member from Prince Albert is proud. Isn't that most interesting.

Today, thanks to luck, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has created a surplus by riding the wave of luck and high taxation. The bottom line is that balancing the books has been relatively painless for the government, but the people have paid a very high price indeed.

The budget shows in the tables on page 83 of the budget address, that Saskatchewan is not tax competitive for individuals compared to other provinces. All they have to do, Mr. Speaker — they don't have to listen to the Minister of Finance, who paints real fabrication for the people of Saskatchewan, creates her own myth — all they have to do is read their own, page 83. All they have to do is take what's happened in other provinces and do their own comparisons, but not one member opposite wants to know the real facts.

What they want to do is promote fabrication. The budget shows in the tables on page 83 of the budget address that Saskatchewan is not tax competitive. Not tax competitive for individuals compared with the other provinces with whom we have to compete. Taxes are a big part of life today, and people make decisions because of that. They make decisions about where to move, where to invest, where to raise their family, based on those very factors.

As a result of this budget, Saskatchewan ranks last, last of the four provinces in western Canada. For \$25,000 incomes, Saskatchewan is 38 per cent above the lowest tax location -- 38

per cent above for those earning \$25,000. For \$50,000 incomes we're the last again of four, Mr. Speaker, and 40 per cent above the lowest tax location. For \$75,000 incomes, look at page 83 — we're last again, fourth again. Last of fourth, and 44 per cent higher than the lowest tax location.

In this budget we looked to the government to show leadership, to give us a reason to believe that this might be the final phase of their so-called plan, a phase that would deliver smaller, less expensive, less intrusive government. We were hoping to see the NDP who created extraordinarily bloated government that they would put themselves on a diet.

But all they've done is to gorge themselves on more revenue than any government in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. By their own numbers, Mr. Speaker. All they have to do is look at their own numbers. The most expensive government in the province of Saskatchewan.

Since 1992, four NDP government budgets have increased revenues by 27 per cent. Do you want to know how much they reduced expenditures by, this government? One per cent. They increased revenues by 27 per cent; they've reduced their own spending by 1 per cent. This election budget presented by the Finance minister reduces revenues by 2 per cent and increases expenditures by 1 per cent. They've increased their spending yet again.

(1445)

Since 1992, Saskatchewan families and businesses have handed over the equivalent of \$2,000 per family of four in extra taxes. And that has meant that people have really had to make some sacrifices — difficult, difficult choices. It has meant that people have had to examine every line of their household budgets to see where they could save money. Businesses have cut staff; families have foregone simple pleasures to do their part. In fact in some cases people have had to make choices between the basics and necessities, Mr. Speaker — something not particularly funny. Choices between quality food and expensive medication. And those are very real and very painful choices for people to make.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier says one day that he needs — and I emphasize he said needs — all of his 88 staff to run his Executive Council, when he really doesn't care if other premiers do the same job with half the people, what he is really saying is that he thinks he is different, that he shouldn't have to sacrifice. What the Premier is saying is that it's okay for ordinary men and women and their children to make tough choices, to go without in order to make his so-called plan work, but the Premier has a different set of rules for himself and his chosen few.

This is a Premier who has chosen to take important things from people, just to make sure that he and his colleagues didn't have to do with less. This Premier would rather have an expensive political department, like the Provincial Secretary, or a Crown corporation like the new casino corporation, rather than give up

those things to keep nurses in our hospitals. And that's the difference, Mr. Speaker.

That's the difference between what is going on across the country with governments who are trying to set an example and do without from the top down, and this government in the province of Saskatchewan, which says, don't do as we do; do as we say. A government that says, you little people can do with less so the Premier and his friends don't have to give up any of their political toys.

I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that this government has been increasing taxes, increasing utility rates, adding VLTs, and increasing fees and costs across the board and they haven't fooled anyone. They can come up with mythical comments about how I would be spending \$300 million. Nobody buys that any more. They don't buy into the myths created by these people anywhere in the province.

Not the 400 people who turned up in Saltcoats for one of our nomination meetings, not one of those people. None of them bought it because they don't believe this government; they don't trust them any more. And everyone of every political stripe was willing to give these people a chance in 1991 and they found out they're just more of the same: don't start with yourself, don't set an example, don't show real leadership. Just put Saskatchewan in less and less of an advantageous situation.

Every single possible place that they saw an opportunity to get more money, they went after it. They never did any planning to see what the effects would be of their cash grabs, what those cash grabs would have on real people. As long as the money came in, the rest didn't matter. And they talk about being a compassionate, socialist government. They didn't even care about what happened as a result of their policies.

But it does matter. It matters because the decision to radically change our health care system, to compete with charities for scarce fund-raising dollars, to pass legislation that makes it harder for businesses to compete, all of those things, Mr. Speaker, have changed the foundation of our economy. In fact they've changed the fabric of our communities. The long-term effects of those changes will make it impossible, impossible for the government to sustain whatever plan it claims to have in its own budget.

The budget we have before us shows that there have been serious flaws in the planning done by this administration. We cannot just isolate this one budget because people have had to live through this confusion since the NDP was elected.

And health care is a perfect example. In 1992 the government decided they should spend less on health care but they didn't have the guts to say we will spend less on health care. No, they did what movie studios in Hollywood do. They built a façade around wellness — which they didn't even define for about a year and a half. They created this false sense that there was a plan, that the plan would save money, and would give us better health care in the process. Once again, Mr. Speaker, we see the

real evidence roll in.

Do we have better health care? Well the 52 communities who no longer have hospitals are not convinced that they do. The 1,500 people who lost their jobs in health care, they don't believe it. The doctor after doctor after doctor who has left Melfort recently, they're not buying the NDP line. Surgeons are not buying the line; the taxpayers are not buying the line; and the patients are most certainly not buying the line. They don't see it either.

I find it most interesting that we have people calling from around the House. I would suggest that he call Dr. Crowe in Alabama who was in Melfort for many years, when he says that no one left the city of Melfort. Perhaps he'd like me to name some other doctors' names, this individual who likes to spread truth around the province of Saskatchewan.

So the system is not better, Mr. Speaker. But let's examine one other thing. Is it even cheaper? Let's examine if it's even cheaper. Not that saving money would legitimize the erosion of the system that this government has initiated, but have all these painful changes at least shown up with a less costly bottom line?

Let's look at health care spending to see if there really is a plan or if there are really any results. In 1991-92 the government was spending \$1.5 billion per year on health care. In 1992-1993 they spent \$1.55 billion on health care. Too expensive, they cried. Save money, they cried. Change the system, they said.

In 1993-94 the NDP government spent \$1.47 billion. They closed 52 hospitals, they gutted the drug plan, and they laid off health care workers. Now one would expect with all of these radical changes that the government would consider to save considerable money. But what is today's reality? In 1994-95 the NDP spent \$1.54 billion on health care, virtually the same that they spent before they closed hospitals, cut staff, and introduced us all to wellness.

Mr. Speaker, this year, would you like to know what they are predicting? They're projecting it and it's in their print with their name on it, Mr. Speaker. They project spending 1.56 million . . . billion dollars. Pardon me, \$1.56 million, actually more than they did than they fixed the system.

I've not found a person in Saskatchewan who thinks that the health care system is better. I think the only person I've ever heard speak positively about it is a New Democrat university professor of health administration.

I talk to people everywhere who are dismayed by what has happened and who are looking for some justification for what the government has done. They could probably buy into this if they thought it was costing them substantially less and helping the province overall. But that hasn't even happened. There is no plan. And the results of the changes have been less accessible, lower quality care for the same or more money, to the people of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan people have gone to the wall to help this government and they've not seen the results that they were promised. The results that have emerged cannot be connected even loosely to any kind of real plan whatsoever. The only identifiable plan that this government has had is to get more and more money from the people. This budget is another classic NDP tax-and-spend presentation.

Since this government took office, Saskatchewan people have generated almost \$1 billion in profits for the Crown corporations through utilities and gambling revenue. But there is no evidence — none — that the bloated bureaucracy of the Crowns has made do with less. The government has been quick to pass along rate hikes, slow to rebate money, when their gouging has become too obvious for even the members opposite to bear.

What government does not realize is that people cannot always wait for rebates, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes the last utility bill is the one that makes the decision for someone to close their business or sell the family home because people cannot afford to make their ends meet. A rebate is no good to those people and there is no rebate in the world to substitute for fair pricing policies at the outset.

In fact the people of Saskatchewan are always last on the list for this government when it comes to getting something back for their efforts. In the frigid month of January 1994, when the Saskatchewan people were asked to dig deeper for an increase in power rates, the Premier made the case that rate increases were necessary, despite impressive profits in SaskPower.

That very same month, Mr. Speaker, he gave all of his staff an increase in pay. Apparently the Premier's staff are still unable to keep up with the high cost of living under his administration because no sooner has this year's budget come out, than pay increases for \$118,000 are being divvied up to Executive Council once again.

Perhaps they'd like to explain that to the professional civil servants in this province, the unionized professional civil servants who have settled for zero increase and 1 per cent next year. So, Mr. Speaker, there is very much a double standard here. What's good for this government is far different from what's good for the people, as far as the NDP is concerned.

The entire budget is based on the premiss that people endorse the idea of putting every surplus dime in the Saskatchewan economy in the hands of the government. It is based on the premiss that people will be content to keep paying through the nose so that this government doesn't have to make any tough political choices.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the government has it wrong. I think people want to see savings to the health care system, but they want to be told exactly what will be saved and where. They don't want to trade a hospital for a district health boardroom with a fancy table and chairs and a room full of government appointees and bureaucrats.

But that's what they've gotten, and that's what they think they've gotten. Every dime that has been cut out of operating budgets and front-line services seems to be gobbled up by the newly devolved health care administrators.

People want answers to very fundamental questions about where these budget choices are going to take their province of Saskatchewan, what the underlying assumptions of this budget will do to their communities. And they want the government to consider some different options for the future.

The Premier would have us all believe that things are very rosy in Saskatchewan. He's so intent on having us believe that that he spent more on a half-hour program of televised propaganda than some families live on in this province in a year. He's so anxious to have us believe in his miracle that he left out important facts and edited the big picture just to serve himself and his political party.

The Premier told this province on his TV Sunday address that there were lots of new jobs for young people. He didn't even try to square that with the fact that we have doubled the number of young people on welfare that we had in 1991. He told us that out-migration had stopped, without bothering to explain that we are still losing some 20,000 people per year from Saskatchewan — more people than we have coming in.

If Saskatchewan is going to grow and prosper, we have to answer the question about who is leaving and who is coming to our province. The Premier cannot claim that young people have quit leaving Saskatchewan because it simply is not true. The goal should not be to have inflow matching outflow anyway, Mr. Speaker. The goal must be to keep our young people here and attract even more people in the future.

It seems to be an NDP myth that as long as you aren't losing, you're winning. Well, Mr. Speaker, I say that breaking even isn't good enough. It's simply not good enough for the people of Saskatchewan, and we can do better with a government that puts itself last and the people first for a change.

The Premier and the Finance minister and — yes — the minister in charge of Economic Development are all telling us that there's a plan for jobs. They're even telling us that there's a plan for investment. But they told us that in 1991. The Premier told us that they had a plan, but the results didn't happen. The results didn't happen the way they said they should if there really had been a plan at all. The results did not happen because Saskatchewan has fewer jobs today than in 1991.

Whether you're using the new StatsCan numbers, the old StatsCan numbers, the number provided by the province, anything, it comes down to one irrefutable number — we have fewer jobs in the province of Saskatchewan today than when they took power. There are fewer jobs now than before his government spent \$112 million on the plan to create jobs in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1500)

The fact is that the economy will not keep pace with other provinces in the long run, despite our wealth of resources, because we cannot diversify under the tax and labour policies of this NDP administration. Almost all of the job creation in this budget is in the public sector — in the public sector, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the government will invest scarce tax dollars to try to meet the targets in its own plan because it failed to create the climate that should produce jobs without government money.

Mr. Speaker, luck is a good thing. And hope is an important element in people's lives. But hope is not a strategy. The people . . . the problem, pardon me, is that other provinces are not willing to count on luck. Well our Premier and his government can think of no other strategy. They won't cut their own spending; they won't get rid of restrictive legislation; they won't make Saskatchewan a competitive place to do business. As a matter of fact, they don't know how, has become very evident.

The incentives held out in this budget are done in desperation — desperation of a government that has failed to create the climate being created in Manitoba, in New Brunswick, and in Alberta. And I suggest to the members opposite that they actually do their own research. Don't buy, lock, stock, and barrel the people that try to brainwash you. Go and find out for yourself.

Just look at the evidence. What's so frightening about the truth? These provinces elsewhere are tearing down the barriers, extending a hand to investors, an invitation to people to move to their provinces, and it's working. It's working in these other places because jobs are up; government spending is coming down — almost every single province but this one.

Saskatchewan is last, last in job creation. It's lowest in population growth, and it's leading the way in high taxation and leading the way in government spending. What a proud record, they say. They cheer themselves on, but they're not willing to even discover the truth. All they have to do is look at their own numbers relative to other places. Not the political spin, have them do the government one. Focus on good governing for a change and find out for themselves, Mr. Speaker, is what each and every government member should do.

Yes, this government is spending more; it's also delivering less. Given the increase to the Department of Economic Development one might expect to see some confidence in what they were planning, some acknowledgement in the budget that the \$112 million invested over the last three years was hitting the targets that they set. But that is not the case. The *Partnership for Renewal* predicted 30,000 new jobs by the year 2000. The Minister of Economic Development has provided absolutely no measurability in his estimated job numbers — zero. No way of measuring this.

He got a stroke of luck with the StatsCan numbers being rebased; they were simply rebased but they were rebased across the country. But the bottom line in the new numbers still shows this, Mr. Speaker, and they don't even want to read about it —

458,000 people were working in Saskatchewan in 1991 and 457,000 were working at the end of 1994. Take the old numbers from StatsCan, the new numbers from StatsCan — if you can subtract, you can figure out we're still 1,000 fewer working since 1991, no matter which way you slice it.

So after four years of planning and \$112 million being invested in job creation by the Department of Economic Development, the NDP almost has us back to where we started from. So whatever plan they're using, we've gained and lost and gained, but the further we go, the behinder we go.

I think taxpayers have a right to expect that the minister should be able to back up these estimates and claims about these new jobs. We haven't seen any evidence of this. It simply is not good enough to spend \$112 million — as his department has done — talking about jobs, talking about economic development, and then not produce concrete evidence as to exactly what direct job creation has resulted from his plan.

It's quite possible we aren't seeing those detailed lists of companies and jobs for one reason — because they aren't there. Even the Finance minister doesn't believe they will come anywhere near the numbers the Economic Development department has been promoting. How do we know that? Well it's in their budget, Mr. Speaker: the budget forecast for the Saskatchewan economy, on page 32. What does it predict? It predicts 13,000 jobs between 1994 and 1998, which is a far cry from the Economic Development minister's commitment of 30,000 more jobs in the year 2000 than we had in 1991. Since we are 1,000 less than we started with, I figure that we have 31,000 to go.

But the Finance minister has already pulled the plug on the partnership plan because she sets the target at one-third of what the Economic Development minister is shooting for himself. Maybe that's what one-third, one-third, one-third really means, Mr. Speaker: creating a third of jobs they promised, adding a third more people to welfare, and keeping another third on unemployment.

When we look carefully at the rhetoric versus the numbers, things simply do not add up. And when things don't add up, we have to wait for the evidence to come in to see how the predictions match what actually transpires.

The problem is that this budget, and more importantly the budgets down the road, are based on predictions, things the government assumes are likely to happen. It is the same tool that they've used in past budgets, except they have consistently been wrong because their policies in labour, in gambling, in government spending, keep shooting their budget plans in the foot.

This is my number one criticism of this particular government, Mr. Speaker. They keep claiming to have plans and strategies, when all they have is luck. The NDP did not plan a huge upsurge in resource prices. What they did plan was expensive changes to labour legislation, to workers' compensation, and so

forth. They planned increased taxes and higher government spending and higher utility rates. They planned to take hundreds of millions of dollars from local economies to fuel their spending plans. The fact is, if luck had not entered into the equation, the NDP plans would have been seen for the farce that they really are.

I cannot stress enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the future would be in serious jeopardy if this government were to continue for another four years. If the government's first plan got us 1,000 fewer jobs than we had four years ago, how can we take a chance on their second plan? Saskatchewan would be at risk if the NDP were able to continue spending as much as it spends today. And they've told us they intend to keep on spending. The debt reduction plan of one-third, one-third, one-third implies that they will be spending 33 cents on every tax dollar collected for debt reduction on increased spending. Very interesting thinking.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to have a government that is obsessed by spending. Taxpayers need to know that the money that comes to government by luck will be slapped on the debt, not frittered away by adding more political staff to government. Taxpayers need to know that every lucky penny that the government finds will be applied to paying down the debt so as to reduce expenditures on interest.

But we cannot trust this government to do the responsible thing. Because the NDP has shown time and time again they simply cannot resist the urge to spend money on more government.

The NDP has already admitted to its spending addiction by holding funds aside in piggy banks for a rainy day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government believes that it has a right to keep undisclosed amounts of money hidden in the Liquor and Gaming Authority, in SaskTel, or SaskEnergy. Why should people trust a government that is selective in what truth it will share with the people of the province?

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not saying that any government should operate without reserves and without contingency plans. What I'm saying is that this particular government asks taxpayers to pay all the bills for deficit reduction, expects the taxpayers to pony up as much money as the government says it needs, and then insults the people of Saskatchewan by holding back information about how much is really in the piggy banks, how it got there, and under precisely what conditions it will be spent.

The debt reduction plan in this budget is just not good enough. The NDP plans to reduce the debt by \$620 million by the year 1999. Let's just examine this for a minute, these people who think they are fiscal wizards.

That equates to \$155 million in debt reduction per year. A 1 per cent reduction is hardly taking a bite out of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This very government has created almost \$1 billion in extra debt itself by running deficit budgets. The \$620 million that it'll pay by the year 1999 is only 65 per cent of the debt that

it created on its own. Like take a basic math class here.

People are tired of trying to dig the truth out of budgets and annual reports produced by past and present governments. The NDP have chosen not to be open and accountable as they say they have. We haven't even seen their audited caucus allowance, let alone seeing the real realities of what this budget means. They've chosen to hide money in the Crowns before, knowing that annual reports will not likely surface until long after an election.

There are a lot of people in this province who feel duped. They feel duped by this government. They feel as though they are being played for fools, and again where government has overcharged people, has taken more in taxes and fees than it really needed to take. They feel the government has not been honest with them about how much extra money they're setting aside for a rainy day or what will happen to money if the government gets another lucky break on interest rates or resource revenues.

The timing of this budget is very, very much tied to an election call, I suspect. The basis for my suspicions is that no one knows the real numbers yet from 1994-95, and I would imagine they're darn worried when the people really do find them out.

Until March 31 we will not know what the real debt is. We will not have a clear picture of the actual spending in 1994-95 until after June or July. We know that the spending will surely materialize, but we cannot be certain what will happen on the revenue side until all the forecasted spending is in for the entire year.

So the government is more or less safe with any predictions it wants to make at this time because there's no way of holding them up against the evidence. It is possible that Saskatchewan under ideal conditions might sustain the revenue side of this particular budget. But there is a difference between possible and probable. Regardless of whether the government can scavenge enough revenue, there is still the basic debate over whether taxpayers should have to support the size and cost of this government that has been created on the expenditure side.

Frankly, I am unconvinced that an NDP government can or will create the ideal conditions that will be required to fuel their spending habits. The fact is that it has taken them two years to see the folly in having an aviation fuel tax that was so high that it drove business and tax revenues out of the province of Saskatchewan. That, in and of itself, is evidence that the NDP is philosophically opposed to creating a healthy economic environment for jobs.

Obviously the government does not create the weather, it doesn't create world prices for agricultural products, it doesn't have any influence over natural resources, and they cannot set the interest rates. So those things are outside of their control, just as they are for any government.

The NDP is making predictions, however, based on

assumptions that the economy will continue to grow and function at levels predicted by financial analysts. The part of the equation that's being left out, however, is the predilection of the NDP to impose policies its very self that choke off the growth that should be happening this time in this country in each government. We will be at far greater risk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at risk as a society, trying to keep up with or surpass expected growth levels if our government cannot control its spending in its desire to curry favour with its political supporters at the expense of jobs and investment in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1515)

Repealing the labour standards legislation would make us more competitive. Open tendering would make us more competitive. Why can't we do what other provinces have done? Give real, equal power to business and labour where they sit together and they make the decisions about what will in fact ensure that we have quality jobs in our province.

And what will impede that from happening? This is happening in other provinces. Why can't it be done here, Mr. Speaker? We don't have to have enemies. We don't have to create adversarial situations between business and labour and between rural and urban people. That doesn't have to happen. But that's what happens under NDP administrations.

Frank McKenna is an example. And I don't mind speaking about him at all and I would suggest they take the numbers from the budget that came down yesterday in New Brunswick and do some comparisons.

Frank McKenna is an example of a Premier who knows how to create the climate that business is looking to invest in. He is successful in a province with far fewer resources than we have in our province. But he understands what to do with the control that his government has, Premier McKenna, who by the way has even been asked by the Premier of Saskatchewan, how do I do the kinds of things you're doing? Which I guess is somewhat of a recognition that McKenna is viewed as a success by some people in this Assembly.

Frank McKenna recognizes that there is more to looking out for the working people of his province than dictating higher wages and better benefits. The New Brunswick Premier recognizes that jobs will grow in a climate that attracts business and investment. He has identified the things that create such a climate and he's actually led the way in Canada to make those things happen.

In Saskatchewan, the NDP has taken the opposite approach and produced the opposite results. While New Brunswick becomes more competitive and more attractive to investors, with more than a hundred million dollars in their budget yesterday for income tax revenues, we've become less so. While New Brunswick attracts companies and jobs, we end up on the list of also-rans as companies pass us by due to the high cost of doing business in Saskatchewan.

Despite difficult challenges New Brunswick has faced — and they have — they're ahead of Saskatchewan in job recovery and they have balanced their budget without the huge windfalls that Saskatchewan has experienced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a budget for the future of Saskatchewan. It is a budget for the future of the NDP government. It's not a budget that sees government do without so people can grow and prosper. It is a budget that clings to bloated bureaucracy and big, big government. And this is certainly not a budget that has resulted from a thoughtful plan.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me return to my initial discussion about process and outcome. The government's claim that it has been operating according to some plan is not supported by their very budget. After almost four years of NDP government, Saskatchewan is still relying on good fortune to carry us into the future. Even if good fortune holds — and I say if — Saskatchewan will continue to be, as a result of NDP policies, less able to compete with her neighbours in Canada and below the 49th parallel.

If the people of Saskatchewan must continue losing \$400 per family to VLTs, if we must continue paying for raises to political aides, if we are forced to pay for increasing health care bureaucracy and birthday parties for the province and bogus Crown corporations and labour policies just to keep this NDP in power, then we will be unable to create a sound and sustainable economy.

We will still be at the mercy of the weather and the world markets, the same as we have always been. If any of those elements does not hold up, if we lose people or jobs or if the interest rate rises, we will not have the tools — the economic tools — to repair the damage.

The NDP plan will never work because people will not choose to come to Saskatchewan as we become more and more of an expensive place to live and to do business, while provinces around us focus on reducing taxes and increasing competitive advantage in the market-place.

Saskatchewan as a province has been lucky. We have been lucky, as a matter of fact, to survive 20 years of governments that have been moving in the wrong direction. But our luck is running out, and time is running out. This budget may buy us one year of fiscal stability, but this government cannot buy a future for the people of Saskatchewan with gambling money and good luck.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I regret that the false assumptions upon which this budget is based, the lack of a plan to produce the critical elements of economic growth this budget depends upon, leave me no choice but to reject the future projections of this budget. And I must therefore reject the proposals to balance the budget on these unsustainable assumptions. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm so happy to see you in your place.

I'm pleased to enter into this budget debate. It is a privilege. Seriously, it is a privilege to be a member of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. I believe very strongly in the democratic parliamentary system that we represent. I'm proud to represent my constituency of Cut Knife-Lloydminster, and I'm proud to sit in this Legislative Assembly with my government colleagues — each one of us representing our area to the best of our abilities but always conscious that we represent the province as a whole.

I love Saskatchewan, and Canada, and I'm so pleased that we have been able to balance the budget two years ahead of our deficit reduction plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — All of the people of Saskatchewan — we have created partnerships — have been responsible for this success, the partnerships that we have created. Working together in cooperation has always been the success of this province, and this effort continued in the last three years.

Balancing the budget has always been a means to an end rather than an end in itself. A balanced budget is the first step in achieving the financial flexibility essential to providing programs and services with predictability and stability long into the future. This has always been a philosophy of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and the NDP: providing stable financial government, providing good government.

This budget does that. It is just not two balanced budgets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Three more are included, through to 1998-99.

What can it do for Lloydminster, Hafford, Kinistino, and Preeceville? The balanced budget provides stable, fiscally responsible government. This is good for small business, for farmers, for educators, health care workers, and for the youth of our province.

Some of the activity that has contributed to the balanced budget is the activity in the oil patch. And I want to pay tribute to the oil workers and the oil workers in my constituency. This is hard work. It's competitive and it means long hours of dedication and commitment to the industry. We can recite all the facts of the oil patch: 2,399 wells drilled in Saskatchewan in 1994, up from 2,200 in 1993; over 500 jobs created; royalties revamped to encourage development. But behind all of these statistics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are people.

The young people in this province deserve a chance to carve out their own destiny. I'm going to share a personal note with people in the House. As a young person I came from a family that could not afford to send me to teachers' college or to university. But because of the public policy that we had under CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and NDP governments, I was able to borrow money to go to school and

repay this. So that today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a standard of living that is higher than my parents and grandparents have.

I've always been of the view that Saskatchewan was one of the few places where a person could reach their potential. Saskatchewan has been a province where ordinary people can create their dreams because we had the public policy which encouraged us to do this. I want to continue this for my children and my grandchildren. And so I'm going to do some comparisons because this is what we've been hearing from the members opposite is some comparisons, and I'm going to do some Alberta comparisons again as I did in the throne speech debate.

Last night we heard that Ralph Klein will have a \$500 million deficit in the current year, yet the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party encouraged us to do things the Liberal way, the Alberta way, the Tory way. No way, as my granddaughter would say, and she lives in Alberta. My little granddaughter would say, no way, grandma.

An Hon. Member: — Smarter than the opposition.

Ms. Stanger: — You're right, she is. Klein is a Premier that has created deep divisions, a two-tiered health system, and a two-tiered education system. What a contrast to our Premier who has been building partnerships with people in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — The Liberals and Tories say that they haven't increased taxes, but what do you call what Mr. Klein has done? And who is going to pay for these services that he has cut?

Let me give you some examples. Social Services cut by 18 per cent. He's going to privatize child care services. Who is going to pay for this? Municipal governments have been cut by 30 per cent. No increased taxes, but who is going to pay for these services? Health care budget cut overall by 17.6 per cent. Who is going to pay for these services?

Funding for kindergarten cut by 50 per cent. Who is going to pay for these services? Funding for home-based education has been cut by 50 per cent. The people that want to and cannot send their children to school, who is going to pay this 50 per cent? Native education cut by 7.5 per cent. Who is going to pay for this?

Funding for adult upgrading has been eliminated totally. Who is going to pay for this? We have the most literate people in the province of Saskatchewan because we have always continued education all through people's lives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — School boards have been eliminated — in fact, practically eliminated; there's 60, used to be 140. And all of the school boards . . . all of the major decisions to do with money and the mill rate is going to be made from Edmonton, not from

local communities.

When Klein stripped local boards of all power and control over their schools, he also paved the way for the establishment of private schools. We saw what happened in the U.S. (United States) when under the Reagan administration . . . practically have a whole generation of illiterate people because public school funding was cut so deeply. Poor people cannot send their children to private schools.

Under the banner of charter schools in Alberta, an individual or group may now set up a private school and receive full public funding, based on the number of students. Klein and his cabinet have claimed that charter schools will give parents more control and choice, but it will force schools to compete with each other for both students and public money. This means a two-tiered education system.

So they say no tax increases, but these are the things that are happening. And you don't have to take my word for it, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I'll read you a piece from the *Vancouver Sun*. This is out of our province. This columnist can take a view of what's happening. This is what she says, and I quote:

That real people, real taxpayers, Albertans who have as much right to the privileges of living in this provinces as anyone else, are getting short shrift on their share of the Alberta Advantage.

Premier Ralph Klein calls them special-interest groups and dismisses them as victims-of-the-week. His critics see people with few resources and no voice, unable to be heard over the real special-interest groups, the powerful business lobbies.

Klein talks about privatizing social services, about community involvement in the schools and regional control of the health-care system. His critics see the government shedding itself of any responsibility for the standards, delivery or equality of services across the province.

When the premier (in Alberta) talks about not taxing Albertans further, he means . . . There won't be (any) new taxes. There will be user fees.

And that is a form of taxation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(1530)

Let's turn to agriculture for a minute. We have a new safety net program because we had the political courage to get out of GRIP, and now we have the finances to provide a new safety net program for farmers. What about Alberta and Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Their GRIP programs are now in deficit. They can't afford a new safety net program.

We are returning 100 per cent of the producers' surplus to them, to the farmers, and 7 per cent of the taxpayers' portion of GRIP

surplus is going back to farmers. Compare that with the broke-and-in-debt Alberta and Manitoba. And what about the federal Liberals? They're only returning 52 per cent of their portion to Saskatchewan farmers. I guess the rest is going to Ontario and Quebec, as per usual.

Mr. Speaker, I support the budget because it is a budget that sets us on a road to renewal. At last there is confidence and hope in this province. There's no doubt in my mind that we live in the greatest province in Canada. I suppose all people feel this way about their home, but I believe we have built a society that portrays cooperation, compassion, and resourcefulness.

This is the Saskatchewan way, a balanced approach, if I may say, to life, besides the budget, with the helping hand extended to our neighbours. Let's continue this tradition and remember that social democrats have made a difference in this part of North America.

Now, Mr. Speaker — I see you're back — I want to return to some of the things that the Leader of the Liberal Party commented on. I found that she, in her address, used very selected use of information. I don't find this completely . . .

An Hon. Member: — Honest.

Ms. Stanger: — Honest. Thank you for the word. As the newspaper article from the *Vancouver Sun* said, no new taxes in these other provinces, but user fees. So when you look at how much it costs you to live in any province, let's be fair. Let's be fair. You can't only use income tax. That isn't the only expense a family has.

Let's take a family of 25,000 and compare them in Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. Okay. We're going to take not only provincial tax; we're also going to take health premiums into consideration, which we have none. We're going to take retail sales tax, which we have but some don't. Some are higher. Gasoline tax. We're going to take rent, electricity, telephone, auto insurance. That's the whole package and basket of expenses to any family.

A person with an income of 25,000 — guess which city is the cheapest to live in? Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Vancouver is . . . it cost a family for all of those services 11,980 in Vancouver; 9,680 in Calgary; 8,563 in Saskatoon; 9,040 in Winnipeg. Saskatoon is the cheapest.

Let's take those baskets of services . . . because some might say to us, well we know you NDPers; you favour people at the lower end of the scale. Let's take people at the 50,000 end of the scale. Same basket of services, same four western provinces, because I don't want to go into the East. It would take too long, and besides they're all higher than us anyway.

Okay. We're going to compare the western provinces. We are by far the cheapest province to live in. And let's look at . . .

An Hon. Member: — Least expensive.

Ms. Stanger: — Yes, thank you. Let's look at the income of 75,000. Again the same story, Mr. Speaker. If you take all the basket of services that a person in this income has to pay for, we are the cheapest province to live in, the least expensive as my colleague from Saskatoon Wildwood says.

So I mean, let's be fair when we use information. We may disagree philosophically, but I try to be fair when I use facts and information.

Secondly, again the Leader of the Liberal Party said that the reason we could balance our budget is because we got so much from Ottawa. She used the two statistics where we got a bit more. The Canada Assistance Plan — we got 11.5 million more from the federal government. And some of the other established programs — we got 15 million more.

What she didn't tell us is that in our equalization payments we got 31.5 million less, and other programs, 6 million less. So as a total, we have a minus from the federal government of \$10.5 million. It's nothing like giving half the facts, is it? At least when you're entering into a budget debate, you're a leader of a party, you should be fair enough to give all the statistics.

Let's move on. Now the Leader of the Liberal Party says all these great increases in salaries. What she's talking about is increments. There was not a percentage increase. There was increment increase. Now as a former teacher, I got increments. Nurses in our hospitals get increments. Psychologists get increments too, by the way.

Now what is the Liberal leader saying? Is she saying that she's against these group of people getting increments? Because that's exactly what the increase was, was increments. You get increments . . .

An Hon. Member: — What about her staff?

Ms. Stanger: — Well her staff didn't get any increments because they never stay long enough to get an increment. How can you get an increment if you leave in a few months? You've got to stay a year before you can get an increment.

But what I want the Liberal leader to be absolutely fair on is to explain what these increases have been, and that is increments. Now are we going to ask . . . Is she saying to the teachers she doesn't believe they should get their increments? Is she saying to the nurses they shouldn't get their increments? Heavens, after years of experience you expect to get an increment . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, it's a warning to people exactly where the Liberal leader stands.

Now that was another use of selective information. Here's another use. She said that it would cost a great deal of money to put the Premier's address on on Sunday. Well let me tell you, he did not use the taxpayers' money to put his address on. The NDP members from Kamsack, Yorkton, Maidstone, Regina, Saskatoon, paid for that to be put on. The people of our party paid, not the taxpayers. We didn't ask them to do that.

So again selective use of information. Lets it hang out there as if the taxpayers paid for his . . . Let me ask her. When Premier Klein was on, I can tell you who paid for that. That was not the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party of Alberta.

Okay, so that's four instances. Let's go on to the fifth one. She said if she had a surplus she would slap it on the deficit . . . on the debt. Well we slapped \$500 million on the debt this year — half a billion dollars. Now let me ask you what other government in this country paid \$500 million down on their debt. What other government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Actually some of my colleagues have been passing me information — the member from Saltcoats and others. I could go on. These were just five inaccuracies in the Liberal leader's speech.

Okay. I basically like to make a philosophical speech. I like people to know exactly where I stand. I don't like to run down other people. I'd rather have a philosophical debate of how I do something versus how she does something. But I'm not going to stand here in my place and put up with selected misinformation. So I have laid out the five areas where she has been inaccurate and I hope the people that are watching this broadcast compare the two different approaches to that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — I want to say thank you to the great people of Cut Knife-Lloydminster and to the people of the rest of the province for your support in the last three and a half years. We couldn't have done it without you.

I also want to say that our jobs as MLAs, as cabinet ministers, as opposition members, are all honourable jobs. Representing people in a parliamentary democracy is the highest form of service that can be given in our society. And I am proud to be a politician and I've learned a great deal, and you have given me that ability to do that in the last three and a half years. And I want to say thank you.

I'm proud to be here, I believe in good government, and I will be supporting the Minister of Finance in her budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to follow my colleague, the member from Cut Knife-Lloyd, who always brings common sense, intelligence, experience, and a loving heart to the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Seeing as none of us can predict when the election call might strike, I want to spend a minute to talk about how I feel about the time that I've spent so far in the

legislature.

I think it's been a great honour to serve under the Premier of this province. To be able to have your first experience as an elected person with a person of that length of service and stature is a rare privilege, and I think we've all learned a great deal from that experience.

I want to thank the cabinet, who in the early days I'm sure spent many long and difficult hours struggling with decisions that later they'd have to bring to the caucus for our thoughtful comments and approval. And I want to recognize their leadership in doing that.

The Minister of Finance and her ability to bring a practical, feminine point of view to the portfolio, and to be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . some of my fellow parliamentarians here are not sure about that. But it's been very good to see the approach that she's taken and the caring and compassion that she brings to the role of Finance.

And as a member of caucus, our very democratic caucus . . . had many meetings both in committee and as caucus of the whole, in which we discussed the government's program. So there was a lot of unity and a lot of consideration of all the decisions that were made and I appreciate very much the work that everybody did in this process.

We know that we're elected to be responsible but the fact is, is that even though people want responsibility it doesn't make it any easier for governments to be responsible. Responsibility means making decisions that people may not always like and responsibility means looking at the benefit of the whole province and not necessarily at one particular area. And I think that when people ask their governments to be responsible, it's important that they then support those responsible actions when they're taken.

One of the things I wanted to give is a little bit of an overview of the way our government works, because I think in days gone by there used to be tendency for departments to operate fairly independently and there would be some money spent here or a big project there. But now government is working more horizontally, so there's a range of interdepartmental working committees.

And the best way I can describe it is raising the water-table. Instead of there being one program that shoots up here, another one that shoots up there, there's a broad base of actions taking place and the whole water-table is rising across government. So there's an improved quality of program and an improved quality of life that results from that.

One of the best examples of that is the Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat and the Women's Secretariat, because both of these have to deal with issues that are involved in every department of government. And rather than just doing one initiative, they're working with all the departments to improve the way that things work in those areas for everyone.

In the Women's Secretariat it's my belief that our government has done more in the area of improving quality of life for women than probably any other government in the history of . . . possibly in the world. It has been a remarkable agenda that's been accomplished.

(1545)

There's been The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, which protects women from abusers and allows them to stay in their homes rather than running in the night with garbage bags full of clothing and toys. Having been on the receiving end of these kinds of problems in various jobs I had, I was very pleased to see the protection move to the victim of violence.

There's a fund that compensates women who are the victims of crime. Under the new Labour Standards Act, women have better protections. There's improved maternity leave for adoption or birth. A woman who suffers a miscarriage is entitled to leave. There's parental leave which replaces paternity leave that can be taken by either parent, allowing them to decide what works best for them. There's a new Act that protects women from harassment in the workplace. We have a prevention unit to educate people on gender harassment issues.

Child care services have been improved — not as much as we'd like to because we realize how important good child care is to childhood development, but there has been additional resources there.

Employment equity programs have been expanded, and there's a considerable improvement in the representation of women in all decision-making levels of government. Breast cancer screening has been improved throughout the province, mental health programs expanded, a facts-of-life line established, a women's health centre opened at the Regina General Hospital, a Midwifery Advisory Council established.

In the New Careers Corporation there's training available, some of it focused on single parents. There's new Future Skills training for women, a gender equity policy developed for all Saskatchewan schools, and additional support for Indian and Metis women who have had difficulty getting the resources that they need to deal with the problems in their communities. There's an improved system for collection of child support payments, increased responsibility for parents.

And I would just like to say I think there's been a terrific job done right across government on improving quality of life for women in this province.

In the area of the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat, we've been able to provide some resources to the Aboriginal Women's Council. We've created a framework for a partnership with Indian and Metis people across the province so that we can, in an equal way, decide how to solve the problems and take advantage of the opportunities that exist in those communities.

We have agreements in the area of resources, land management,

health, social services, education, recently on the gaming agreement. We have a full range of agreements that have been made that recognize their desire to be involved in management, in operations, and as well, in accountability for the programs being run. And I think it's a terrific step in the history of the province to undertake these developments.

We are dealing with issues in urban centres. There's been the establishment of some urban bodies to coordinate services in Regina. We have the Aboriginal Human Service Co-op, the Regina Metis Management Authority, and there's also an urban treaty organization that's been established by the Touchwood File Hills Band to assist people, regardless of their band origin, who are in urban areas.

There's been assistance to the Indian Federated College; they've set up a new MBA (master of business administration) program reflecting their desire to get more involved in economic development and banking. And that is a program that everybody has very high expectations for. The Bank of Montreal is involved partially in the funding of that program. And that's just a little bit of the good news.

We had a good news story yesterday. There was a health training agreement signed with the Sherbrooke health centre in Saskatoon, where aboriginal people will be training for new jobs in level 3, 4 and 5 care. I think that this is a very positive step. The Sherbrooke community health centre has recognized that a substantial number of the people who receive health services in the province are Indian and Metis and that therefore they should be part of the people who are doing the care-giving.

So this is a very good agreement, and it was exciting to be there and be part of that signing. We have an MOU (memorandum of understanding) signed with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council to allow participating in health care reform. And again this is a matter of getting the right kinds of services to the right place.

Sask Property Management Corporation is another area that I have some responsibility for. I was down there this morning and met with staff and employees over a pancake breakfast. And I was very pleased of the good atmosphere that existed in the corporation. They've been making a lot of changes over the last few years in terms of tendering, procurement, making many steps to save taxpayers millions of dollars and to improve government credibility.

One project I was involved in from the back benches involved using the skills of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) to help third-party organizations like universities, municipalities, school boards, health boards, to use the expertise of SPMC to improve their procurement practices and to enable them to take advantage of lower prices on a whole range of commodities that they have to have, and that includes vehicles and computers, whatever it is that they're involved in where they can help people save money.

They are doing a lot of things to create jobs and stimulate the economy. They break up large orders into smaller orders so that

Saskatchewan businesses can access them, and to help small business grow in Saskatchewan.

We've speeded up being able to get money into the hands of suppliers so that they're not suffering cash flow problems from waiting for payment. We've taken some of the money-losing boondoggles of the previous government and turned them into viable operations.

The Echo Valley Conference Centre reopened with a partnership between the Department of National Defence, New Careers Corporation, community and native groups, that brought the western Canada Sea Cadet training program to Saskatchewan.

This has done a lot for the community of Fort Qu'Appelle and has injected a lot of new activity. So it's gone from being a money loser to being a viable and contributing portion of the economy in that town.

In the past two years SPMC has cut expenditures by 20 per cent or 33 million. And they've cut positions where they were not essential to the new style of operation there and saved again some money in doing that.

They've encouraged departments to return surplus space and have saved five hundred thousand million in accommodation costs. And they've also branched out into working more with non-profit community organizations to help people who have difficulty getting space but have important services that they're delivering.

As well, SPMC and myself were involved with other people in the Regina community in freeing up some land that had been sitting idle for some 40 years. It was heritage land and so it could only be used for particular, designated purposes, but there's now a garden — a community garden — on that land. And it was really good to go to the opening of that garden and see the retired farmers teaching the young school children how to garden, and just the whole community out in the garden together, rather than in their houses and isolated from each other. So it was a good . . . it's not only a good food project but it was a good community project.

In terms of the commercial services of SPMC, their records management saves departments more than 1 million annually by removing inactive files from high-cost office space. And that's actually a service that we provide broader than within the government. And we also save another 2 million annually by coordinating voice and data services for the government.

We're streamlining this corporation and changing its culture. And one of the things they've done, they're working quite aggressively on employment equity and they have improved both the ability of people to promote up through their system — people who may have started, for example, in the cleaning area and are now training to run the autoCAD system or some other aspects within it — and they've also improved greatly the opportunities for disabled and visible minorities. And I think

SPMC has a better record actually than most other departments and Crowns in government at doing this, but I don't think have been recognized for it yet. So I'd like to recognize them for their efforts there.

And I'm going to slide just briefly into maybe some not-so-good news. I found it passing strange, as the new minister of Liquor and Gaming, that the Leader of the Liberal Party, who had been so concerned about gaming that she had been out touring communities, had not taken advantage of even one question period to get on her feet and ask me a question about this pressing issue that had caused the need for a tour. And I just want to review a little bit of Liberal policy on gaming before I move into ours.

On July 3 of 1992, the Liberal leader said that she was worried that first nations casinos would threaten provincial revenues, as well as racetracks, bingos, exhibition casinos, and video poker. So it was okay for all of the non-aboriginal community to make money off of this, but it was not okay for the first nations and aboriginal community to make money off of this.

FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) Vice-chief Roy Bird responded by asking her to wake up and smell the coffee, and support Indian people instead of working against them.

Then she told us to hurry up and start the VLT program. In the estimates debate on June 1, 1993, this is direct quote:

Mr. Minister, video lottery terminals have been the subject of much discussion even here and for some time now in the province. In fact, the province has probably foregone 50 to \$60 million in revenue while the discussions have been going on.

So her policy in June of 1993 was hurry up and get the VLTs in.

In a letter to hotel owners, dated March 7, 1994, the Liberal leader endorsed the Saskatchewan video lottery program and accepted the government's policy reasons that there is a role for video lottery terminals. Direct quote again:

There is a role for video lottery terminals to play in recirculating income through hotels and lounges which have been hard hit during the past few years of recession.

Again a pretty clear statement in support of the very reason why we put them in, is that they were having difficulties and wanted to participate in a video lottery terminal program.

In May 1994 she changed her mind, flip-flopped, and attacked VLTs for sucking money out of the public's pockets. On November 9, 1994 she called on the government to cease casino expansion in Saskatchewan and said, we don't need a referendum on this issue.

The Liberal leader has proven time and time again that she either has no policy, or she is duplicitous, or has a darn short memory, is my thought after hearing a lot of the debate this year. This is what Darryl Mills, her communication assistant, said on January 8, 1995, quote: we're not committed firmly to any position.

In the recent discussion on VLT revenues, I am astounded by someone who feels that they have some ability to improve the economy and create jobs when they don't even understand that obviously what you are going to make at any particular terminal depends on the local market. You can't have a machine in a small town, in a small market, making the same as a machine in Edmonton. It's just not sensible to think that. And that she would even compare our revenues to those other places shows an astounding lack of knowledge about market as it relates to business.

We have estimated our figure, our \$508 average figure, by taking total sales minus commissions minus operating expenses and coming out with an average of 508. We have above-average sites that make up to a thousand dollars, and in a very few places, a little bit more. And below-average sites, about a hundred and fifty, that make 2 to 400, and some that make very little at all. The figures that were being used for Manitoba and Alberta were before commissions and expenses and reflected machines in much larger markets.

The VLT program was not merely for budget reasons. We didn't go to the community and say, would you like VLTs? The community came to us and said, we need these in order to remain competitive with people on our other three borders. So this was a response to rural communities and rural hoteliers. And if the Leader of the Liberal Party wants to debate that, that's probably where she should take that debate, is where the source was of the decision to do it.

I find that her research facts and statistics are not her strong point and I could have a lot more respect for the arguments if there was some rigour that went into the developing of these positions, not merely jumping on any available isolated number on any given day.

I want to review our gaming policy because people have said that in this House that we don't have one, and I can assure them that we do because I was involved in its development over a very lengthy period. The policy is, Mr. Speaker, to limit as much as is possible. That's why we've placed a cap on VLTs and that's why we've signed an agreement on casinos that limits the amount of expansion that can take place and requires market study.

We have age-restricted sites so that children are not being encouraged to take part in this activity until they've reached an age of consent, where we all agree that they have the judgement to decide whether to drink and whether to do a number of other things.

We have tried to improve control in regulation and I think that's

improved a great deal with this recent agreement. I'll go into it a little more because I want to go through the points systematically. We made a commitment to protect charitable revenues, to ensure the public use of funds versus just an individually-based community or private use of funds, based on a principle of revenue sharing, which is always the principle that has driven the Consolidated Fund and the use of its revenues.

We made a commitment to deal with the problems and have the best addiction program in Canada to deal with these issues, which complements programing in other health areas such as alcohol and drug, and other problems that exist. And we committed ourselves to involving all people in the benefit, not just some people.

(1600)

That's the broad outline of the policy, but I want to go into a little more detail here because I think it's important to understand how we've arrived where we are. Most of the pressure for gaming in Canada and Saskatchewan historically came from religious and charitable groups who have received the majority of the benefits.

In 1969 the federal Liberal government indicated in the Criminal Code that governments must be responsible for controlling and regulating gaming in Canada and the provinces. And the reason they did this was a good one — they did it to prevent criminal activity that built up around gaming in the United States.

In the U.S. the money went into private pockets and was largely unregulated. The Canadian government also based their decision on the experience with Prohibition. In 1969 Saskatchewan began with horse-racing. In the 1970s lotteries and casinos got going, bingo commercialization occurred in the 1980s, and VLTs, and so far one new casino, in the '90s.

In no instance was the government the proponent. The VLTs were requested by hoteliers in small towns to stem the flow of dollars over the border, and based on a pilot project in the south-west it was found that their concerns were true, and once the border hotels had this provision the other hotels in the province wanted it also. And we've had to turn down requests so far from Legions, Elks, Anavets and other service clubs who are also interested. But because we've capped the number of machines, we now will be spending some time considering how to fairly distribute within the framework of that cap.

The one new casino in Regina was based on the FSIN coming forward and indicating their interest as a proponent in these developments. Enforcement was a big issue. When White Bear opened, they opened without band approval, without FSIN approval, or provincial approval.

They also opened with illegal machines. Now an illegal machine in the gaming field is a machine that does not necessarily deliver the odds that it promises, so that a person

could be putting a lot of money in there without any hope of actually winning as the machine is obligated to deliver.

Due to the provincial responsibilities to enforce the Criminal Code, the RCMP made the decision that they must enforce the Criminal Code to be fair to all citizens. And this was a very potentially explosive situation here.

In the new agreement, the FSIN has been delegated authority from the province to set up an Indian licensing authority to control and regulate charitable gaming on reserves, thereby improving control and regulation. And in return they've agreed to recognize our authority for enforcement of the Criminal Code. And we think it's important to create this jurisdictional unity in the enforcement of laws in the province.

We've agreed to continue to take up the discussion of jurisdiction with the federal government in Ottawa. But although jurisdiction and inherent right was part of the red book during the election, they seem reluctant to act on the promises that were made under that election platform.

As far as use of revenues go, the province and community charities currently benefit by about 150 million in gaming revenues from lotteries, bingos, break-opens, VLTs, and already existing casinos.

The main change that's taken place lately in our policy is for the first time in history first nations people have access to the same money that other people in Saskatchewan have always had access to for the past 29 years. And without these new revenues, the groups who have already participated in gaming revenues would have to give up some of their revenues. But the aboriginal people have said that they will create their own opportunities there, much on the scale of the exhibition association developments that we've already had.

The other developments that have happened, as far as the first nations people go, is that the chiefs voted 100 per cent in favour of this agreement. And it's a recognition that they also want to have more licensing and regulatory control over even the charitable gaming that now exists on reserves.

As minister responsible for Indian and Metis Affairs, I'm also working with first nations on implementing inherent rights, self-government, and treaty land entitlements. As I mentioned earlier, in the section on SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat), we're negotiating agreements on justice, child care, social services, health, education, resource co-management, fishing, hunting, trapping, economic development, and finance.

So for people who say that the FSIN is hung up on gaming, it is a very small part of their priorities, and it's only one particular area that needed to be dealt with. And they've dealt with it. I consider my pressing responsibilities to be with many of the other parts of their agenda.

I'm pleased to speak in unity with the people of Saskatchewan

on their priorities. I think people want financial responsibility. I think they want a caring and compassionate government. I think they want fairness and I think they want balance. They want a holistic and a planned approach. And I'm very pleased to speak in support of this budget today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice today to have the opportunity to enter into the budget reply.

We have, Mr. Speaker, here the half-truth budget from the half-story government. And I'm not talking about the storeys in the building. The story they tell is the story of grand and wonderful things until, as one article put it in one of the papers, you read the fine print. And in Saskatchewan we have the fine print contract in our budget.

Fine print tells you that this government has balanced its budget on the backs of the people, downloading to the RMs (rural municipality), school units, and property taxpayers throughout this province. Downloading in the budget that came in last year, the one that people have forgotten about, but was written in such a fashion that it takes its effect now. That's where the people in the school units are finding that they're now going to have to try to balance their budget with higher taxes at the local level.

Even with the freeze that we have this year, there's absolutely no doubt that if something doesn't change we will have to see a dramatic increase in local taxation. Because a freeze, meaning no cut-backs or no less money, does not take into account the escalating costs of utility bills, the escalating costs of teachers' salaries, and the escalating costs of all of those benefits that go to the employees that grow older and have seniority benefits coming to them throughout the system.

And so any time that you have something breaking even, you lose. You have to have built into it an escalating factor that takes into account the ongoing increase of costs of operation.

I would like to reiterate some of the points that were made by our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, in my discussion about this year's budget.

I think it is appropriate that we do congratulate the government for balancing the budget. That is a good thing to do, and it's nice to see that we have done that part of it. Unfortunately in government there are choices that have not been taken. There are always choices in government of doing it one way or doing it another way.

I think some of the folks used to say there's more ways to kill a cat than to choke it with butter. I probably have said that here myself. And the reality of life is that you can run over it with a truck or shoot it with a gun, or a whole lot of other things.

Well budgets are like that too. You can balance them one way or you can balance them the other way. And we've got some

tremendous opportunities in this day of our society to compare the different approaches.

We have Alberta to the west of us doing things in a totally opposite way that the province of Saskatchewan is doing. We've got eastern provinces starting to balance their budgets. I'm not sure if it's the trendy thing to do or if the financial community has finally just said, we're drawing the line in the sand and you're either going to balance your budgets or we're going to cause you big time trouble, trouble you can't afford to have. I'm not sure exactly where the motivation is coming from, but it is a trend for everybody to try to balance their budgets.

So the question then is, how do we balance our budget. What techniques, what methods, will we use?

Well in Saskatchewan it's unfortunate but here we have a government that balances the budget basically on the backs of the farmers of Saskatchewan; \$188 million worth of GRIP money they take out of the farmers that was promised to them. Then they've got \$119 million surplus. That to me is a \$69 million difference, Mr. Speaker, a \$69 million difference which says they should have even had a bigger surplus if they'd have done their mathematics and run this province properly.

They took it out of the backs of agriculture and out of the backs of rural communities; broke their spirit and destroyed any potential prosperity in rural Saskatchewan.

And what happens, Mr. Speaker, now, if the court challenges that are before the courts right now, happen to be successful? What happens if those people who are challenging the breaking of the GRIP contracts find themselves in a position of winning and this government is forced to cough up their \$188 million and pay all the farmers. Where will the money come from then? Where will the budget have gone to then?

What kind of calamity and disaster will we have on our hands if a government is forced to pay up the money that they have taken out of agriculture. It will break the bank of Saskatchewan. Not only that, we then have lost several hundreds of millions of dollars that the federal government would have put up as a balance against the GRIP contracts.

How then, if that challenge is successful, will the province go to the federal government and ask for that money back. Do you think the feds are going to bother listening? Or will somebody have to take them to court? Then I suspect it will be the Government of Saskatchewan having to take the federal government to court to get the money back that they threw away. It's an absolute recipe for disaster, to allow the breaking of contracts to balance your budget.

We've done this on the backs of taxpayers and on the backs of people who should have had increases in their wages. I can think of the judges' contracts, I can think of all kinds of people who have been duped into thinking that they've had to have their way of life frozen in order to benefit the needs of this government.

Well we have the examples of people in Alberta, people in New Brunswick, finding other ways to solve their problems by building job bases and expanding their tax bases and getting money from development and organization.

This budget has come at a tremendous cost, Mr. Speaker, to many families, small businesses, and communities. One of the most devastating areas where the burden has been borne by rural Saskatchewan is of course in the area of health care — almost a cut, slash, and burn approach to rural health care. The only thing they haven't done yet is burn down our rural hospitals that stand partly used, three-quarters empty, and not benefiting society as they should be and could be. I almost hate to say it for fear I'll give them the idea.

To just give a few examples of how people in communities from my area have been hit, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to you about the Prairie Health Care Centre in Cabri, where the need for two acute care beds has become so absolutely imperative that the people in that community have started a letter campaign. They have started sending letters to their MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and their MP (Member of Parliament).

My colleague from Morse and I have both been receiving many, many, many of these documents from people requesting our assistance to try to help them to once again get a rating of acute care beds for their hospital. It's absolutely essential for that community, Mr. Speaker, because they lie in a geographic position such as many communities never ever understand: 35 miles from Swift Current, 35 miles from Leader, 35 miles from Gull Lake, and 35 miles from everywhere. And there you are with a nice new hospital that was an integrated facility, everything set up, everything built, everything paid for, administration in place, doctor in place, a lot of work gone into a pharmaceutical structure so that they could get drugs administered in that town to their patients.

Everything in place and then a government comes along and shuts the whole thing down, destroys the whole concept of organization there. They end up with the care home part of it operating, the beds for health care gone, and the doctor in total disarray, the prescription drug program totally up in the air, and no funding for emergencies or for people to come home from — say — hospitals like Swift Current where they may have had a major operation. People who are being sent home, as you've heard earlier today from some of my colleagues, with major operations, needing a place to rest for three or four days, being sent home to take a chance on infections setting in. And death is the only true companion that they can count on.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, this is a despicable act, to be doing this kind of thing to rural Saskatchewan. And a town like Cabri does not deserve to be treated this way. They need their special care beds. And I think if the Minister of Health were the compassionate man that he tries to portray himself as being, then he would get out there and take a look firsthand and talk to

those people and reinstate at least one or two special beds so that they could take care of their people and not give them a death sentence.

I want to talk, Mr. Speaker, for a minute about what used to be the Gull Lake Union Hospital; now it's a wellness centre. And it's drastically under-utilized, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that some people just simply call it a bandage station because that's about what it really has become. Certainly it's much more to people who have a very immediate emergency because the doctor there has been a wonderful person and a wonderful community supporter and has given very, very magnificently of himself to stand with the people in that community and give them whatever service that he possibly can to help to make their lives better and to save lives.

But he doesn't have much to work with, Mr. Speaker. He's got a building. I believe there was \$700,000 spent on the upgrading of that building, put into just tremendous shape, all redone, fixed up, medically sound. Heat is good. The logistics of the operation are such that the nurses' station is properly located and that the workload could be distributed throughout the centre without too much trouble, as compared to some of the older buildings. It was just done very well.

And there it is with only a couple of rooms being used, and the rest of the hallways stand there quiet and empty. And we have several people in our community and the surrounding area with Alzheimer's disease. We have people who are terminally ill, who are at home in their own homes with no place to go, not even for a couple of days to give their families a rest while someone would take care of these folks for a little while.

It's an absolute disgrace that we treat our people in this way. And I'm thinking of specific examples that could make tears come to your eyes, Mr. Speaker, if you knew about their circumstance and how these people in these families are suffering.

And why? Because we haven't got the intelligence to use a modern, new building that stands in the middle of our town, heated, lighted, but empty. All we need is a few nurses, and away we go. Everything else is there. But this government claims that they were going to close 52 hospitals to make some money for the province. And yet the cost of health care has gone up in Saskatchewan. It didn't go down. It's not cut the budget. It's not reduced the spending. It's transferred the money to somewhere else because now all of a sudden the city hospitals that were scheduled to be shut down before have to be open because they've got more patients than they can handle.

Well what a revelation. If you shut down all the country hospitals and the people have no place else to go to get their health care, where were they going to go but to the cities? They were bound to stand in line and congest the system in the cities. It had to happen, just like we said it would.

And the real cruncher comes in my area of the province, Mr. Speaker, when you watch people standing in line to get to

Medicine Hat for health care because there you at least can get in the door and get your operation long before you can ever get into the line-ups in Saskatchewan.

And I could give you specific, individual people's names, Mr. Speaker, of those folks who go to Medicine Hat as an alternative to anything we have in Saskatchewan — not because the doctors are better there, but because they're available there. You don't have to wait for 18 months with a cancer growth; you can get it taken out before it kills you.

And that's the difference, Mr. Speaker, and that's the tragedy of the life story of rural people in the area that I come from.

I'd like to talk to you, Mr. Speaker, for a minute about Maple Creek and the needs of a new special care home down there. Its current facilities are old, badly deteriorating buildings. Put very bluntly, that's exactly what they are. These buildings, the Minister of Health may want to come out and take a look at. Some of them are over 30 years old. Some of them are falling apart. Renovations would cost as much as building a new building, I'm told, for the one. And yet those people and their needs are ignored by this government.

And I sometimes wonder if they don't keep this high education and health tax, the PST (provincial sales tax) in place with the hopes that all of the people from Maple Creek will go to Alberta and then they won't have to bother spending any money to fix the special care home or the hospital because there'll be nobody left to use it.

But realistically, Mr. Speaker, those people can't all leave, and they won't all leave. They're tough pioneer-spirited people; they've done without a lot in life, and they'll hang in there. And they don't deserve to be treated this way. They don't deserve to be given the short end of the monetary balance of the budget.

And if this government were truly cutting costs, those people in that area would be the first ones to say, we'll get on the bandwagon with you, and we'll share the burden. These are the salt of the earth kind of people. Not one of them would say, I won't pull up my end of this and do my share. They'll all go along with you the extra mile.

But that's not what's happening. It's not cut back for everybody. It's take my share and give it to somebody else in the cities. And that's not fair, and that's not right. And they don't like that, and they're not going to accept that, and they're going to ask people like me to come here and tell you so.

In so many ways, Mr. Speaker, the suffering in rural Saskatchewan has been totally unnecessary because it hasn't helped to contribute one thin dime to the economy of this province or to the debts or the deficits or whatever else you want to talk about. It's all been a misguided use of choices.

While these communities have borne the hardships, the families of Crown corporations have been getting fatter with the money that's been squeezed out of the citizens of our province. The

family of Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, with higher utility rates in power and gas and telephones and everything we use, bloated so that the debts and the deficits could be met under a guise of them using those monies to balance our budget . . . sit there in great reservoirs now swelling and waiting for an election time goody. And what do the people of the rural communities get? They get told, go to Alberta; get your medical service there.

It cannot be understated that this balanced budget came about in a great measure by a combination of almost unbelievable good luck and unbelievable cruelty. The cruelty I've talked about. The good luck of course has to be the unprecedented boom in the gas and oil sector. It has happened a couple of other times in the cycles over the years. But a record of \$202.1 million in sales of lease rights was recorded last year.

And where did that money come from? Which part of the province and where in the province were those land sales taking place at? Not in Regina and not in Saskatoon. It happened in rural Saskatchewan, and to a large part it happened in south-west Saskatchewan. Big oil companies, little oil companies, medium-sized oil companies, gas companies came into our province and bought up those leases by the millions of dollars worth to explore for gas and oil. Millions of dollars worth of money over and above anybody's wildest expectations in last year's budget came out of that area of the province.

And does this government consider for one minute that some of that money should go back to those people or to those areas? Absolutely not. It's not recorded in their actions at least. Where is this money? It's gone to the general revenue again where choices are made of where to spend it.

But those choices aren't to build the roads back in south-west Saskatchewan so that the trucks can get in there to do the work. It's not to put a hospital in Gull Lake with an acute care bed or one in Cabri so that the people that work on the rigs, if they happen to get a leg cut off in the middle of the night, have a place to go to get some medical attention. Ah no, we'll build that in Regina so that by the time you got there from Gull Lake or Maple Creek, you'd have been a long time dead.

And, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this government builds a budget this year based on that phenomenal one-year income from the oil patch and the gas sector, and that whole thing is about to blow up like a gas line with a leak and a match lit beside it because the reality is the price of gas has gone down and oil is not too stable. And the oil and gas companies are simply not buying leases any more this year. In fact the established oil companies and the established gas companies are about to start to lay people off is the rumour mill out in our area. And if that happens, this province is going to be in some dire circumstances because our budget will no longer be balanceable because it's been balanced on projections that are not reality in the real world.

We have other examples of where money comes from, Mr. Speaker. Cameco for example with net earnings of \$81.1 billion

also posted one of its most profitable years ever. And I wish them luck; I hope they can do it again next year. But the reality is that normally when you have a boom, you also have a backing off period. And I don't think this government has prepared for that. I don't think they've done anything to realistically determine what they're going to have available in this budget for next year or for this year.

The increased prices, Mr. Speaker, for the sales of canola, wheat, and other agricultural sector products has greatly improved the outlook for the agricultural sector in our province. And on paper it looks pretty good, and I'm happy about that. Coming from the farm sector, I recognize it as a very positive thing.

But I've got to caution the government, Mr. Speaker, because the reality is that an awful lot of farmers are still financially behind — financially behind the old eight ball yet because the debts that they incurred through the dirty '80s which my dad, incidentally who's still living and lived through the dirty '30s . . . says the dirty '80s were worse than the dirty '30s for farmers and for people in the agricultural sector. I'm not going to go into his delivery of reasons why that is true; it's sufficient to say that that's his opinion. I happen to share that.

But the reality is that even with the upswing in commodity prices we have lots of farmers who are still in serious, serious financial trouble. I spoke with a lawyer in our community just the other day, and he told me that every week three to four farmers come through their office asking for help, legal help, to take them through financial difficulty. This financial difficulty can end up being with negotiations with ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan), Farm Credit Corporation, or could end up in bankruptcy.

Three to four farm families out of that corner of the province, in one law firm, coming for financial assistance to try to get out of trouble, using the legal system — that tells me that the farm crisis is a long ways from over. And commodity prices simply haven't done everything that needs to be done out in rural Saskatchewan.

Now you tell those people that taking away \$30,000 worth of GRIP money over the last two years isn't significant. They're just simply not going to listen to that, and they're not going to believe it because they live the reality of having to go broke and having to hire lawyers to fend off their creditors.

Now these factors, Mr. Speaker, along with others, led to a temporary boom that led to a deficit reduction. Unfortunately the government did not see fit to share its good fortune with farmers. They played a shell game with the GRIP money. They cut programs, and they increased taxes on inputs. And the farm sector, in reality, might find itself worse off than ever if the commodity price markets happen to slump.

(1630)

The other terrible thing about this is the letting off of the feds

with the money that they owe to Saskatchewan farmers through that program. How often do you get 3 or \$400 million from the federal government offered to the farmers of Saskatchewan when you had them tied in with a contract? You let them off the hook, and you let the money get away. And that disastrous result will spin through our economy for a long, long time.

The cost of inputs in agriculture continue to escalate because of the increased prices of gas and oil and power. The tax downloading to property tax that I talked about a few minutes ago hits farmers directly square between the eyes. There's just no getting away from it. The cost of producing a bushel of anything or any kind of an agricultural unit of production . . . the cost of producing it has gone up, dramatically up.

And, Mr. Speaker, the increased commodity prices that we are getting simply is not enough to cover all of that. And so rural Saskatchewan finds itself in the same dilemma that it was in in the late 1980s: cash poor and debt high. Indeed if the world agricultural markets, again surely by luck, hadn't been favourable to farmers in Saskatchewan's agricultural sector, then we would've been in serious, serious trouble. And many farmers, I believe, would have been wiped out by this government's total mismanagement of the agricultural sector and the agricultural GRIP program.

Instead of patting themselves on the back, Mr. Speaker, for these windfalls and acts of cruelty, the NDP should have been addressing the structural problems in government that lead to debts and deficit. They speak with scorn for the spending habits of the 1980s when you have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that in good times government should spend more wisely and put some aside. That's what we should be doing now.

But in bad times governments must spend money to offset the economic shock to people. And that's what happened in every jurisdiction in North America and in fact, I believe, in the industrialized world through the 1980s. The reality of life was that every jurisdiction ran deficits to try to ease the shock to their own people of an economy in the world that was going basically down the tubes. We didn't do too bad considering what happened to some other jurisdictions, but we could have done better. There's always choices that could have been made that could have been better. But the reality is that we were in no different shape than anybody else.

Yet this government, since they took office, 18 of the 23 government departments have increased their spending. They talked about the wrong attitude towards spending of the past administration in the 1980s. And yet when they came to power, they said they were going to cure all of these problems. So what did they do? Instead of cutting government, instead of reducing spending, they increased the cost of 18 out of the 20 departments. Unbelievable.

With such a great example sitting right to the west of us of how you can do things differently, they choose to plough on steadily by increasing spending and increasing taxes to pay for it. And they wonder why our job base shrivels up and dies.

How are they any different than those governments that they so glibly criticize, Mr. Speaker? They're not really. They've only managed to live in a time when commodity prices have gone up, and they've lucked into it. Well they've done little to reduce spending levels from that of the 1970s and '80s. There is one major difference between that era and this. The NDP have institutionalized almost unbelievably high levels of taxation.

And let's talk a little bit about the facts of the taxation that the people of this province are having to bear. Fact — 10 per cent rise in income tax. Fact — 20 per cent rise in telephone rates. Fact — 17 per cent rise in the price of gasoline. Fact — 27 per cent increase in natural gas rates with a .06 decrease just a little while ago, applauded by the government as a great thing at a time when the natural gas price itself, at the commodity level, had dropped 40 per cent. And they give us relief of .06. Absolutely unbelievable. Fact — most astonishingly, a 29 per cent rise in the provincial sales tax from the man who campaigned on doing away with the PST.

I remember it well, on the radio and the TV — no more PST. Well what a hollow ring that has to it today, Mr. Speaker. The NDP are so fixated on their appetite for big government that they would rather crush thousands of families across this province than reduce a single government department or privatize a single Crown. They do this even in the presence of more positive examples, either from the east or the west of us in our own country. And lots of other examples if you want to go further abroad.

The government has heard about the advantageous position of the Alberta model, the numerous times already this session, Mr. Speaker, and the public is demanding to hear more and more about what's going on in Alberta and what could be done here to emulate their very positive approach.

The government's legions of expensive political assistants have done their best to paint Ralph Klein as some sort of a Canadian Darth Vader. They tried to convince the people of Saskatchewan that this is a bad guy. In reality, Mr. Speaker, this man is a legend in his own time. He's a hero at home and he's a hero abroad. He's a hero in Ottawa and he's a politician's politician. And he's just a great example for the province of Saskatchewan to follow.

While the Premier and the Finance minister may want to try to hide behind ideology and rhetoric, they can't hide from the hard, cold facts — the Alberta growth and success story. Alberta produces more jobs in a year than we could ever dream of, and we lose a thousand jobs over the past three and a half years — 30,000 jobs in Alberta in one year . . . and we get? We get to watch them fly by. With the new reduced fuel tax on airplanes, we helped to contribute so that they can load up more plane loads of our young people and fly them to Calgary. That's what we get in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard time and time again from the economists that the government's high tax policy costs jobs. We all know it does because quite frankly nobody's going to stop in this province

when they see that they can go to Alberta and operate with so much less cost in taxation.

The government doesn't deny this, and even their best figures show that the province did lose a thousand jobs since 1991. They try to paint a good picture on it by coming up with all kinds of facts and figures, but the reality is that Klein's Conservative government in Alberta has created 80,000 new jobs over that time span. New business, incorporations in Alberta jumped 21 per cent in 1994. With a consequent rise in revenue from corporate income tax, the province finds itself making more money now without reducing taxes. It's an economy with a tax base, and it works, Mr. Speaker. Go to Alberta and find out. Alberta's GPP (gross provincial product) has been over 3 per cent for the last two years. That's a sign of success.

Here the government talks about dramatic turnaround. But unless you are a bureaucrat, you're not likely to have noticed any difference, Mr. Speaker, because only the bureaucrats have gotten higher wages and better positions. The rest of our society has been told they're on freeze.

One place where the difference between Alberta and Saskatchewan is noticed is in my home riding and throughout the south-west. Ironically this area has been the centre of much of the government's windfall in the oil and gas revenue.

Mr. Speaker, we feel that we have helped by good fortune of living in the south-west where the oil and gas industry has done well, and by good fortune that agriculture is picking up. But we feel that we have been slighted, abused, used, and ignored by this government. So much of the wealth of this province has come from our area and none of it is finding its way back home. Yet where the fruits of prosperity have come from, this government continues to tax in such a way to drive businesses out of the area.

Just the other night there was a TV clip about the town of Maple Creek. The mayor, Doug McAlister, was on the television and he told the story about how people are leaving the town of Maple Creek and about how the businesses are closing, up and down the streets in that town.

One major factor is identified by the mayor — taxation, and the difference in taxation between our province and Alberta, most specifically the 9 per cent sales tax in this case.

The hon. member from Morse has already spoken as to the damage that the high PST has done to the economy of the western part of the province, Mr. Speaker. That member quoted from the February 13 edition of the *Leader-Post* where Dale Eisler explained the plight of the people from the Swift Current area. And certainly those of us in our constituency fall right into that explanation and the things that were said by the member from Morse.

What was most amazing about the article was that the response of the member from Swift Current was that he said that the PST

problem was just a convenient excuse for not being good business people.

I dare say, Mr. Speaker, that this gentleman must not plan on running for politics ever again in his life, especially in Swift Current. Because the business people in Swift Current are excellent businessmen and businesswomen. They've done a phenomenal job of managing to keep any kind of business going in light of the unfair competition that they face in terms of having these higher taxes placed on them.

Not just the 9 per cent that is directly competitive that allows people a 9 per cent advantage to go to Alberta, but the higher utility costs, the higher taxes all across the board. The income tax, the whole thing — it's all built into the circle. Every dollar that a businessman earns is taxed to death in Swift Current, far beyond that which happens in Alberta.

So his costs of production, his cost of keeping his business open, the downloading of the business taxes from the provincial government, the downloading on education that costs local taxpayers to have to pay more, all of that has to build into an escalated part of the sales price of any item that any businessman sells.

Anybody that retails will tell you all of his costs have to be built into it before there's any profit. And when there's no more profit, you go broke. Those people cannot compete on a fair level playing field with Alberta, and yet they still stay there and survive. It's a miracle. It's not that they're bad business people; it is a miracle that they survive at all.

And the member from Swift Current ought to shake his head. But it is typical of this government's insensitive attitude, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Swift Current also responded to the latest round of complaints from the area's business people by coming out with some incredible figures that proved that the PST problem in south-west Saskatchewan didn't exist at all.

Meanwhile, another Swift Current business man, Marvin Shatosky, stays afloat by renting U-hauls to people going to Alberta on shopping trips. The MLA from Swift Current can produce all kinds of studies and he can do that all he likes. The people of south-west Saskatchewan can see the truth before their eyes in the form of empty U-hauls heading west and full ones heading home from Medicine Hat and other towns in Alberta.

The unfavourable comparisons between Alberta and Saskatchewan government policies don't end with taxation, Mr. Speaker. Labour policies also differ between the two provinces. Just as we warned, this province's new labour legislation is having a serious effect on the hiring practices in our oil patch. A lot of work going to Alberta contractors who do not pay taxes in our area or in our province provide jobs for Saskatchewan.

(1645)

It is not uncommon to hear of Saskatchewan boys applying in Medicine Hat so that they can be shipped back home to work in the oil fields. Mr. Speaker, think about it. You have to go to Medicine Hat to get a job so that you can get in a truck to drive back to Saskatchewan to work all day, and then at night you may go back to Medicine Hat or some other place.

It is bad enough that the government is killing jobs with high taxation. It is intolerable that they are also doing it with ill-timed labour legislation, Mr. Speaker. The south-west may have particular problems with the government's short-sighted taxation and labour policies, but all of Saskatchewan people are groaning under this tremendous burden. Many of our detrimental effects remain in spite of hard-earned concessions recently gained by the small-business community. And of course there are some small concessions. There's a little bit of tax relief if you're in the manufacturing industry. But reality here, Mr. Speaker, is compared to this: the government has taken away the loaf and they're throwing back the crumbs.

The legislation still makes it more difficult, expensive, and complex for employers to deal with part-time employees. That's discouraging employers from hiring. That's the reality of the labour Bills that we passed and The Labour Standards Act.

The government's arbitrary benchmarks on the size of business covered by The Labour Standards Act have created confusion and unfairness in the market-place. An example, whether or not franchises are covered. For example, a lot of people simply don't know how these Bills and how these laws are going to affect people. If you have three people sharing one job, are those people counted as three people in that job place, or is it counted by the job? People aren't taking any chances because they are confused and they don't know, so they're not expanding and they simply aren't employing more people for fear that they will get past these benchmarks that have been set.

Benchmarks also encourage employers to stay under that benchmark, Mr. Speaker. This again discourages people from hiring. Simply, they won't take the chance on getting caught in a more expensive area of the legislation.

But where The Labour Standards Act is simply ill-timed and poorly written, The Trade Union Act amendments are destructive to the labour market in this province. Communications between employers and employees is inhibited. New areas of cost and resentment from employers who are expected to pay for all of the benefits to striking employers is a serious problem. Taking away management negotiation rights, such as the ability to call for a final offer vote, bothers people. New, Draconian penalties that can be imposed on the basis of little more than hearsay, Mr. Speaker, is totally unacceptable and will drive people out of our province if they have the choice to take their business elsewhere.

Throwing up time constraints to technological development, again unacceptable when you have alternatives like Alberta or Manitoba or somewhere else to go. Inhibit the competitiveness of Saskatchewan business by severely restricting their ability to

tender out services.

And the reality here, Mr. Speaker, is that we have union-preference tendering going on in our province. And it's got all of our rural municipalities and urban municipalities absolutely upset and worried about the extra costs that they will have to pass on to their taxpayers.

We have certification and decertification made even more undemocratically than ever before. These are simply unacceptable to people who might spend their money developing businesses in our province. And they simply won't stop here if they've got the choice to go to Alberta or somewhere else.

That's why Alberta is growing and we are stagnant — a stagnant budget in an isolated state. That's what we are in Saskatchewan. We are a province isolated from the world, with Draconian legislation that makes us unusual and unacceptable to the outside business world.

In the February 20 edition of the *Leader-Post*, Randy Burton outlines how Saskatchewan is lagging behind other provinces in the competition to attract jobs. Mr. Speaker, Burton notes that in the race with New Brunswick and Manitoba to attract new call centres, Saskatchewan is getting shellacked. I've got a copy of the article with me here, but Burton says:

Over the . . . (last) several years, Manitoba has seen seven or eight major new companies established, creating more than 2,500 new jobs in call centres, service centres and marketing companies that depend on telephone service.

By comparison, Saskatchewan has attracted one company, a Sears Canada call centre, which produced 600 jobs . . .

Mr. Speaker, and the public will remember that very major concessions had to be made to that company in order to get them here in the first place.

A lot of folks in business don't believe that there should be special considerations for one group and none for the other. They believe we ought to have fair and reasonable legislation that covers everybody and gives everybody an equal opportunity.

The leader in the race for this telephone-based service, the company, is in New Brunswick, Mr. Speaker, which has so far attracted 19 such companies. Now New Brunswick, who would expect would end up being the leader in attracting all of those companies and all of those jobs? But there it is. They've got them and we haven't. What's the difference between our province and those provinces down east? One very significant one is attitude, Mr. Speaker.

One Toronto entrepreneur moving to New Brunswick says of the province and I'll quote:

... everybody's working hand in glove. We had the federal people ... the provincial people, the municipal people, ... every level of government and other entrepreneurs, other people who have also located in this area ... Everybody was very helpful ...

On the other hand Burton notes in his article that Saskatchewan has several disadvantages such as its labour laws.

Saskatchewan's new labor law dictates benefits be paid to part time workers, which most call centres employ.

Another major disadvantage the article notes, Mr. Speaker, is of course taxes. The article quotes Dale Botting, and I quote:

We have surtaxes on surtaxes on flat taxes on taxes, and you start to compound them ...

And that's the reality, Mr. Speaker. When will the government get through its head, Mr. Speaker, that it cannot attract new business, cannot create new jobs, and cannot turn this province around with high taxes and restrictive labour laws.

The opposition has presented the people of this province with a clear alternative. On the labour side, we will be calling for the repeal of The Labour Standards Act. If the government itself thinks this Act is so bad that it needs to make changes and major concessions and to delay certain aspects of the Bill, then why have the Bill at all, Mr. Speaker? The reality is that they worked through regulations and continue to make changes.

On the tax side, we believe that the tax burden and the structural problem of the government's deficits should be relieved by doing away with tax-and-spend budgets of any kind — balanced or otherwise — Mr. Speaker.

Taxes should be replaced with an across-the-board 5 per cent cut on all government departments. This would immediately lighten the tax load by \$200 million. And after that it must become illegal to present tax-and-spend budgets ever again by bringing in The Taxpayers' Protection Act.

This Bill presented by our caucus would go far beyond the mere window-dressing of the government's proposed legislation, Mr. Speaker. It would call for — and I'll list a few things for you — an accounting for all revenue and expenditures including Crowns, tabling of quarterly financial statements to maintain tighter public scrutiny of the government's fiscal targets. In stark contrast to this budget, all surpluses would be applied to reduce the debt and therefore to reducing taxes, Mr. Speaker.

We maintain further that balanced budget legislation without teeth is a paper tiger. Our Act would therefore call for province-wide referenda to ratify either tax increases or deficit budgets.

Finally, if a government failed to balance its budget, the government members themselves would feel the sting of having their salaries reduced by 25 per cent. Build in some penalties

for the people that don't do their job right.

Mr. Speaker, in our "Mr. Premier, I want to know ..." cards, at rallies and in coffee shops across the province, we are hearing that these are the kinds of measures that the people of Saskatchewan really want to have put into effect.

The Premier may think that his army of hacks has convinced the public that taxes are good for them, but they have not. You can't sell higher taxes to the people. They just won't buy that argument any more.

I cannot urge the government too strongly to start listening to the public, Mr. Speaker. Open up your ears; listen to the people. Their first opportunity will come soon when we introduce our Taxpayers' Protection Act and our motion to repeal The Labour Standards Act.

There is a chance, an opportunity, for the government to show the people of Saskatchewan that they're willing to listen to what they have said and what they are asking for. Support these pieces of legislation and set this province on a new and true course to real prosperity and sustained and long-term tax base development.

In the meantime I can only condemn this half-truth government for their continued dedication to tax-and-spend policies as has been exemplified by this disaster of a budget which simply has gone on to say we're going to have more of the same and no real and true building for the future in the province of Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, as I've sat in this legislature for nearly eight years, Mr. Speaker, I'm astounded. This budget speech is the first one that all through question period the opposition parties, both of them, have been virtually silent about the budget.

Why have they been silent about the budget? Because this is the best budget Saskatchewan has seen for well over a decade. This is the first balanced budget in over 10 years. And it's the first of four more — five — in our longer-term plan leading right up to the year 2000. Five in a row, sustained, balanced, surplus budgets and they have nothing to say about it in question period, and I say that's a shame. The people of Saskatchewan are the losers because they've got nothing to talk about other than some other generally more frivolous things.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there's two people have made some quotes and I want to see if anyone can recognize. One of them said: there's so much more we can be. Now who said that? The member from Estevan in 1982. There's so much more we can be.

Who said this now? — personally, I think we should have

higher targets. In other words, there's so much more we can be. Who would say: personally, I think we should have higher targets? The member from Saskatoon Greystone, the Leader of the Liberal Party, in 1995 in this legislature — so much the same it's just scary.

We have two people who have said that not once has the government hit its own target since it took office. Now I'm going to help people here. One person that said that is the Associate Minister of Finance; the other is the Leader of the Liberal Party. The Associate Minister of Finance said, when you're setting up a budget, you take your 10-year average crop, take that, that's what you budget for. You know you're going to be wrong. Some years you'll be higher; some years you'll be lower, but you know that that's on average . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. It now being 5 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 2 . . . Order, order. It now being 5 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow . . . Does the Government House Leader have another agenda? Order. Maybe the members are in such a jubilant mood that they would like to come to the video tonight at 7:30 in 218.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — They may just learn how this House should really run. With that, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.