The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan with respect to the closure of the Plains Health Centre who plead:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And, Mr. Speaker, people who have signed this petition are from Herbert, Saskatchewan; Morse; all throughout the south-western part of Saskatchewan; and many people from Regina as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan in regard to the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. The petition reads, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to: (1) rescind the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and especially its mandatory union hiring hall formula; (2) prohibit the expansion of this Crown Construction Tendering Agreement or other like agreements to other Saskatchewan Crown corporations or to other government departments and construction projects; and (3) prohibit the expansion of this agreement or any other like agreements to other government-funded construction projects with local health districts, school boards, municipal councils, or other joint venture partners with the Saskatchewan government.

This petition is presented from people in the, primarily in the Saskatoon area, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today from people all throughout southern Saskatchewan regarding trying to save one of the important hospitals of the province, Mr. Speaker. The prayer is as follows:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition today are, most of them are, from the Moose Jaw area, Mr. Speaker; many from Regina, in fact many from the constituencies of Regina Albert South and Regina Elphinstone.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of hundreds of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina; they are from Humboldt; they are from Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. They are from all throughout Saskatchewan, and it would give me great pleasure to present this petition today.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition to present of numerous people that have signed from the Plains. I'll read the . . .

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And they come from numerous centres throughout southern Saskatchewan.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Preeceville, Herbert, Moose Jaw and Regina and throughout the province. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to also present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

People that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Fort Qu'Appelle, but also Regina, Edenwold, Southey, Fort Qu'Appelle, and others. I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in regard to the saving of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

This petition is signed by people primarily from Regina, but all through the southern part of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present names of people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are mostly from Regina but also from Moose Jaw.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Moose Jaw, Mortlach, Caronport, Riverhurst, Herbert, to mention a few.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. And the prayer reads as follows:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The petition is signed, Mr. Speaker, by people from Radisson, Grenfell, Wolseley, Langbank, Whitewood, Kennedy, all across southern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review, and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility rate process in the province of Saskatchewan.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions come from the Marshall, Radville areas of the province, Mr. Speaker, down through the South. I present them today.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition on behalf of the issue of SaskPower and I read the prayer:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review, and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility rate process in the province of Saskatchewan.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these come from the communities of Hague and from Rosthern.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon we have 10 pages of names of people from Saskatchewan who would like me to read the following prayer to the Assembly:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review, and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility rate process in the province of Saskatchewan.
>
> As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these people come from all over the province, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to halt the closure of the Cypress Lodge kitchen services;
>
> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates;
>
> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement; and
>
> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

> To the minister responsible for Health: (1) why were dead-on-arrival statistics regarding how many people died *en route* to a hospital, as well as those who were pronounced dead when ambulances arrived, not available when requested last year; (2) what is the reason the minister claims DOA (dead on arrival) statistics are not available prior to the closing of 52 rural hospitals and instead only since 1993; (3) what is the explanation for individuals pronounced DOA increasing between '93 and '94 by almost 200; and (4) please provide DOA statistics regarding the number of individuals who died *en route* to hospitals and those pronounced dead on arrival on the scene for '92 and '91.

And I have another question to the Premier. I give notice that I shall on Friday next ask the government the following question:

> To the Premier, regarding the provincial regulation that any personal property left behind by a residential tenant must be stored for up to six years after the tenant vacates the rental property: (1) does the Premier intend to comply with this regulation with regard to the furniture and garbage delivered to his constituency office this morning?

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

> Regarding the Department of Finance's $105,012 1994-95 payment to Phoenix Advertising of Regina: firstly, what was the nature of the work performed by Phoenix for the Department of Finance; secondly, how did this work benefit the taxpayer; thirdly, how was this work awarded; and fourth, what means was used to determine the amount awarded?

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to present to you and through you, members in your gallery from the rural municipality of Bayne. We have with us the reeve and some councillors. And they are in town for the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention sincerely hoping to hear some good things about what's going to happen in the near future for our municipalities.

And I would like to have the Assembly welcome them warmly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature, three special friends seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

They are Roger and Sophie Nelson, residents of Regina, who are here visiting the building and going on a tour later. And Sophie is the mother and Roger the step-father of Donna From, who is my very good friend and also my constituency assistant. And we all know how important constituency assistants are to our work as MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

So I will ask all members to welcome them here, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a couple of guests from my constituency. We have two gentlemen up in your Speaker's gallery; I did ask them to sit in the opposition gallery but they chose to sit there.

So I'd like to welcome, first of all, Maurice Onyskevitch, the manager of northern affairs for COGEMA resources, and also Mr. Mike Dailey, who's a village councillor for the Buffalo Narrows council. And I would ask the Assembly to welcome these two gentlemen here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery this afternoon, I'd like to recognize and introduce to the House two individuals: Mr. Karl Austman, who's a fireman with the city of Yorkton and works for the Saskatchewan burn unit; and seated beside him is Ms. Maryann Federko, who is an employee with SaskTel and is also involved with the Saskatchewan Labour Council here in Regina this afternoon, doing some work for both of those organizations, and ask the House to join me in welcoming them to the question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to, through you and to the Assembly, join the member for Humboldt in welcoming the RM (rural municipality) council from Bayne and the administrator. We're meeting with them after question period to discuss some of the issues, and I just want to say welcome and have a good meeting.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Humboldt Charity Fund-raisers

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize two organizations from my constituency, specifically from the town of Humboldt. First I would like to commend the Humboldt Big Brothers and Sisters on the success of their recent fund-raising event, Bowl for Millions. Approximately 55 bowling teams pledged their support and raised over $11,000. This money will be used to continue their work in fostering and maintaining matches between big and little brothers and big and little sisters.

Second, I wish to commend the Humboldt Kinettes for their efforts in raising money for Telemiracle through a skate-a-thon. Skate with the Broncos raised $4,100.

Congratulations to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Humboldt and the Humboldt Kinettes for their fund-raising efforts and for showing their concern for other people. A huge pat on the back for the people of Humboldt and area and a thank-you for generous contributions in helping those less fortunate than you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Green Lake Saw Mill Agreement

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The village of Green Lake is an easy stone's throw away from my constituency, but today I would like to throw out congratulations to Mayor Fred McCallum, the people of Green

Lake, and the 50 or so workers associated with the Green Lake saw mill. Thanks to them, to NorSask, to Mistik, and to the ministers of the Crown, we have another fine example of partnership in action.

Last Friday, Mayor McCallum signed an agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan which will guarantee a long-term wood supply for the saw mill. This means of course, in addition to the jobs, a long-term boost to the local economy, Mr. Speaker. This agreement has been a long time in the making, and I believe as well special mention should be made of the ministers of Environment and the Minister of Northern Affairs, village councillor, Kevin Roy, and others who have brought these negotiations to completion.

Under this agreement, the Green Lake saw mill will be allocated 30,000 cubic metres for the next 20 years. Renewable every five years, the supply will come from the NorSask and Weyerhaeuser forest management licensing agreements and other Crown lands. My congratulations to all involved.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to commend the community of Green Lake on signing the long-term wood supply agreement with the province. Saskatchewan's Environment and Resource Management is guaranteeing a wood allocation of 30,000 cubic metres every year for the next 20 years. It is renewable every five years. The people of Green Lake have been working hard towards such a deal for a long, long time. The saw mill operations in Green Lake are vital to the local economy.

Green Lake has a population of 700 people, and the saw mill operations employ 50 people. While this is a very positive step for the community, it is now up to the provincial government to honour the terms of this deal. The government has assured the people of Green Lake it will monitor the operations of companies to ensure they comply with the new agreement's provision.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that this new, long-term wood supply agreement will open a door to further negotiations with the government on other projects because the Green Lake area has lots of potential for economic development.

I congratulate the Green Lake Village Council and the Green Lake Metis Wood Products Limited on their efforts on behalf of their community.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Keystone Bulk Transport in Moose Jaw

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to note some very good news for the city of Moose Jaw and the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, Keystone Bulk Transport from Brandon, Manitoba, has announced they will be setting up shop in Moose Jaw and hiring 33 people to fill their mechanical and truck-driving positions.

They have signed a five-year contract with Moose Jaw Asphalt. They also do work for Kalium, Saskferco and Simplot. Mr. Speaker, Keystone will be constructing a large maintenance shop in Moose Jaw and hopes to be in full operation by April 15.

This is, Mr. Speaker, one more example of an out-of-province company who has the confidence to invest in Saskatchewan and who now has the opportunity to expand their business interests in the city of Moose Jaw.

This represents a very good deal for Keystone, for Moose Jaw Asphalt, for the people of Moose Jaw, and the province of Saskatchewan, plus 33 new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you and all members would want to welcome Keystone to our province and wish them every success in the city of Moose Jaw.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Royal Bank Cup Junior A Hockey in Melfort

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The city of Melfort will host the Royal Bank Cup May 4 to 12. This is the Canadian junior A hockey championship. I commend the host committee, the volunteers, and fans for the wonderful job that has taken place thus far with the agenda for the week.

To the co-chairs, Randy Sorensen and Dale Frier, it's going to be an event that definitely makes history in the Melfort-Tisdale constituency and for the province of Saskatchewan. This is an opportunity for showing the famous hospitality of rural Saskatchewan. I bring this to the attention of this Assembly at this time because I believe there's still a few tickets available to watch some of the best hockey in Canada.

Please join me in congratulating the Melfort host committee for hosting this great Canadian event.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prince Albert Regional Enterprise Centre Opens

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert Regional Economic Development Authority recently announced the establishment of the Prince Albert Regional Enterprise Centre. The centre was formed by a partnership of several interest groups to facilitate economic development in the Prince Albert region and to encourage entrepreneurship as a viable career option.

This enterprise centre creates a single-window site for services supporting the development of new and existing businesses and provides interaction between established professionals, businesses, students, and community ventures. Services provided by the centre include educational training programs, counselling and consulting assistance, financial assistance, as well as research and a resource centre.

The partners involved in forming this worthwhile service include Woodland Institute, the city of Prince Albert, Prince Albert Grand Council, the chamber of commerce, the Metis employment centre, Saskatchewan Economic Development, as well as the Prince Albert REDA (regional economic development authority). It is through partnerships of this kind that new opportunities are being created in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in congratulating Prince Albert REDA and the chairman, Mark Hislop, on this partnership.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Congress on Rural Education

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a resident and an educator from rural Saskatchewan, it is with great pleasure I inform that starting today the first ever national congress on rural education is being hosted by our wonderful province in the city of Saskatoon.

This three-day event is a visionary approach to examining the unique aspects of rural education and will greatly expand the opportunities for our youth in rural Saskatchewan. There will be Canada-wide participation. Every province will have representation made up of local rural communities, parents, students, educators, and elected officials.

Issues that will be addressed will include governance, curriculum, program options, delivery of special needs programs, viability of small schools, technology, and transportation.

Historically, many rural Saskatchewan residents have gone on to contribute to Canada and the world in many aspects of life. That this congress is being held in Saskatchewan is a testament to the quality of Saskatchewan's rural education system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Overpayment

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture and his staff have taken an important first step in the current GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) controversy. Whether it was the minister, or member acting on his behalf, who is merely an extension of the minister, they have done the right thing by ensuring that a Saskatchewan farmer's GRIP wind-up bill was reviewed by Crop Insurance and treated fairly.

However, there are thousands of other Saskatchewan farmers who now deserve the same courtesy, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister do what is appropriate and commit to the review of each bill on a case-by-case basis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess I'll try this one more time. Mr. Member, the program has been established; the letters went out in December . . . or September of '94 and January, 1995 explaining the program.

What you did yesterday, Mr. Member, was disgusting, and it was not the truth. The letter that you put forward yesterday and tabled, accused . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I'm going to call the minister to order. He knows fully well that he can't do indirectly what he's not allowed to do directly. I listened carefully to his reference to the hon. member telling what is not the truth and I'll ask him to simply withdraw that remark and continue in his response.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I'll withdraw that unparliamentary remark, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, my point is made because today . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Now the minister knows as well that it is out of order to comment regarding the Speaker's ruling, and I'll ask him to simply proceed with his answer directly now, or I'll go to the next question.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member was proven wrong yesterday. In the paper today, I quote, "Baraniski confirmed in an interview that he never spoke with Upshall."

So the credibility of that member has gone down the tubes. But what I will say . . . if he ever had any. What I will say is that the process remains the same. Farmers have their bills. If they have problems paying their bills, they should contact the corporation, work out a repayment plan, work out their options with the corporation. And that's what we have done in the past and will continue to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that the comments and calls that are made by the minister's office are reflective of the minister, and I hope that he has some control over that, Mr. Speaker.

I will again, Mr. Speaker, ask the minister and say to the minister that what he did was right. I don't know what his problem is. What he did was right. That's what the farmers were asking for, was some help. We and the farmers of Saskatchewan are calling on him to continue doing what is right.

I would now like to send over to the minister two more bills and ask that he follow the same process as he did with the previous case. And will he make the commitment today that he will do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, another example of Tory grandstanding on the backs of people who may have

serious problems paying their bills back . . . or Liberals; I can't tell the difference.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, and tell the member through you, offer again. When I first came into this portfolio I invited the critic, Liberal critic of Agriculture, to my office to go over the issues of the day, and he refused to do that. Then I made another offer. I said if there's any problems that you have, any case work, please just bring them to my office. That's the way the system works. No, he hasn't done that.

He was going to give me all the GRIP bills. Well we haven't seen any yet. And I think we know why — because farmers are more responsible than the Liberal agricultural critic.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — And, Mr. Speaker, the member continues to try to indirectly tell people that I interfered through my office so I'll do some more. He's too naïve and maybe not smart enough to figure out the answer. People call my office all the time; we direct those questions to the proper place and they're dealt with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rural Economic Development

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Economic Development. I have in my hand a memo from him addressed to the Premier, cabinet ministers, MLAs, and deputy ministers. The intent of this memo is to assist them in handling questions from the press and constituents regarding economic development in rural Saskatchewan.

When I read it, I was greatly offended. This member stated, and I quote . . . the memo stated: "There was, and still is, no intention of providing a grand strategy for rural Saskatchewan." End of quote.

I would like now to table this memo, Mr. Speaker. And will the minister stand up and explain to the Assembly and the people of rural Saskatchewan why we are not part of the strategy to develop our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, if the member was at the SARM convention this morning — I don't know if she was or wasn't — she would have heard me delivering an address to the SARM delegates outlining the essential elements of a job-creation strategy and an economic strategy, a key component of which was the question of rural Saskatchewan. References to the *Partnership for Growth*, the references to the Ag 2000 paper, and then I went on to talk about the social policies and the reconstruction of local governments in the province of Saskatchewan.

Those are all documented. They're all public knowledge. The strategies are set out there. The member knows that's the case. And I think that they speak for themselves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, in the minister's *Partnership for Growth* plan he did focus on a couple of things — jobs and increased tourism. Right after he introduced this plan, the Minister of Environment was quoted in the *Leader-Post* on February 23 as saying:

> "If we are to maintain the parks as we know them today, we will have to make some very significant changes and tradeoffs between fees and (levels of service) . . . "

Mr. Speaker, our parks attract 2.4 million visitors each year. How does the Minister of Economic Development expect to increase tourism when the Minister of Environment is planning on gutting our parks?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member I think should await the budget and should await the unfolding of the legislative agenda of the government before she makes an assumption behind the question that she talks about. The Tories, who interject from their seats about this matter, say, waiting for four years. Of course that position has netted the Tories exactly five seats in the legislature and third party status because they had their heads in the sands then and they have their heads in the sands now.

There is a policy with respect to tourism and it's a policy which is more than simply economic development, *Partnership for Growth*. You have to read the second document. It's Ag 2000 as well which is complementary to the economic development paper. And I think if you see the two of them, you see here a record of steady growth for jobs and improving economic circumstance and improving fiscal situation. I'm not saying we've reached our targets. I'm not saying that we can't do better. In fact we haven't reached our targets and in fact we can and must do better.

But the game plan is there. It's a game plan for the future. It's preparing Saskatchewan for the 21st century. It's a game plan of growth and prosperity and hope. And the opposition parties unfortunately are on the game plan of looking backwards and not forwards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this government has repeatedly neglected rural Saskatchewan. Last year they spent only $1.6 million on our parks and now they're threatening to increase the fees and cut services. Mr. Speaker, this is going to kill jobs in rural Saskatchewan, and it's shameful.

At the same time the Minister of Economic Development authorized multimillion-dollar overruns in the construction of casinos. I suggest to the minister that he needs to re-evaluate his priorities. Our parks, Mr. Speaker, are one of the few family-orientated activities left in this province and one of the few reasons people have to visit rural Saskatchewan.

Will the minister confirm that the casinos in this province are more important to his government than parks, and it is the legacy his government prefers to leave to our children?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I say with the greatest of respect to the member, and I say this quite sincerely, who is after all a freshman member, fresh person member of the legislature, the question is extremely confusing., And I would like to think that a lot of it is occasioned by the fact that she, like all the other freshman members of the Liberal caucus and the Tory caucus, are feeling their way through.

But I want to say that it is confusing in more than simply, in more than simply . . . It's confusing, Mr. Speaker, in more than simply phraseology. It's confusing. However it seems to me typically Liberal, who campaigned on the last election, June, 1995, that we had too much government; we should cut back.

It is confusing because the Liberals would have us cut back on government services, reduce taxes and balance the budget all the same while, and not telling the people of Saskatchewan how in the slightest they can achieve that.

And finally I close, Mr. Speaker, by saying, in the interest of time, is the hon. member saying, because I think again she should tell this to all the members of the caucus, that the arrangement which we have made with Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations for the sharing of the casino proceeds, for example, and are working on with other aboriginal peoples, is unacceptable to the Liberal caucus today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

McDowell Report

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier.

Mr. Premier, in March, 1994, the McDowell commission was appointed to review the issue of MLA compensation. This independent process was supposed to improve the public's confidence in the legislature and the people who serve here. However, because of your government's handling of this issue, it has had exactly the opposite effect.

The public is more cynical than ever because the MLAs are now going to get a pay increase, instead of a decrease recommended by McDowell. And both your government, and both your government and the Liberal opposition seem more than happy to go along with it. And since the Board of Internal Economy meeting, you've done nothing to address this, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Premier, what steps are you taking or are prepared to take to address this problem? What steps are you taking to roll back this unintended increase for MLAs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about confusion and cynicism, and he tries to cast the government and other members of this House in the role of villain in this regard. But the truth of the matter is that the person who casts the biggest confusion and doubt on this issue is the member himself there who voted for these proposals when they appeared before the Board of Internal Economy — and you know that you did.

And the answer for the position of the member is obviously very clear. The *Leader-Post* — I'm not very often wont to quote it in support, but I think they got for one time their facts right in this case — they say:

> Tory leader Bill Boyd claimed they delayed it in order to wring more money from the taxpayers. He forgets that the difference in pay schedules is relatively small and that the delay was recommended by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, whose integrity is above reproach. The new pay scheme should come into effect as soon as the Clerk's staff have the necessary systems in place to support it.

And I think that's a position that is a logical position and it's a factual position. And the hon. member knows it.

Now the member says, what are we going to do about it? I'm going to ask the member, what are you going to do about it? You don't want to do it, have every one of your . . . You tell us. Every one of your members can turn it back if you want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, your government had no problem finding a way to claw back VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues from hundreds of communities. Your government had no problem finding a way to claw back GRIP overpayments from 12,000 farmers. Surely it shouldn't be too hard to claw back overpayments from 58 MLAs. That is a problem that I think you need to address, sir.

Mr. Premier, your government and the Liberal opposition may be prepared to sit back and accept this increase, but we are not. We have a solution to this problem and we will be introducing immediately after question period, we will be moving, a motion to adopt the McDowell report retroactive to January 1 as originally intended and recommended.

Mr. Premier, will you support our motion and roll back the MLA pay increase?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I note how the flip-flop of the Conservatives and the Liberals continues and persists.

I have here in front of me the March 5, 1996 Board of Internal Economy minutes, verbatim transcript, March 5, 1996. Here it is, Mr. Boyd, on page no. 8. I'm quoting from page 9, and here are the exact words if *Hansard* is to be believed — and I believe it. Mr. Boyd says:

> . . . — we continue to accept the recommendations — and we reluctantly, I guess, would be prepared to go along

> with the July 1 implementation date, but very clearly we want to be on record as being in favour of the substantial . . . the implementation of it could have and should have been done substantially earlier than it was.

That is exactly what he said. That is what the record said and he voted for it. Then he gets a favourable column in one or two of their journals of the newspaper, and gets up and grandstands. You've got a solution; I've got a solution.

I challenge each and every one of your PC (Progressive Conservative) MLAs to turn back every part of what you think is unfavourable about this recommendation that you supported and voted for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I'll ask all members of the Assembly to come to order. Order, order. Order. I'll ask all members of the Assembly to come to order.

Proposed Service Districts

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Government. Madam Minister, we are now starting to see further details of your plans for municipal government. According to a letter you sent to mayors and reeves around the province, you plan to establish yet another level of government. Quoting from that letter:

> A service district will be managed by a board of directors composed of representatives of the councils of member municipalities. It will offer a flexible menu of services under various financing arrangements including fees for services and charges back to municipalities.

So in addition to existing municipalities we will now have a bunch of new service districts councils, with the power to provide services, charge fees, and tax. This is a whole new level of government, Madam Minister. How does this square with your goal of reducing the amount of local government in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The hon. member again either deliberately or perhaps unconsciously is not familiar with the provisions of the services district Act and the concept behind it. The concept behind it is very clear. We want to seek efficiencies. This is what the purpose of this whole exercise is all about.

The Municipal Government department, for example, advises me that in Saskatchewan we have an average population per municipality of 1,200 in Saskatchewan. That's the largest level of governance. And by the way, individual municipalities' governments total 847, even more than Ontario at 831.

For communities of under 100, the percentage of total spending on overhead is 46 per cent. For communities of 100 to 250 the percentage of total spending on overhead is 42 per cent.

Now the hon. member would say that maybe nothing should be done about this. I'm talking about the entire issue of governance. We don't agree. We think the 21st century is that the taxpayers and the ratepayers who support the very good folks at RMs and urbans and us, they want it to be as efficient as possible. And the service districts Act is a voluntary approach to set guidelines as a way to move toward the 21st century. Please join us; we're not back in the 1950s.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Madam Minister, quoting from your letter again with reference to what's supposed to happen in the 21st century:

> A service district will cover the cost of its operation from a combination of revenue sources, including user fees and an annual levy from participating municipalities. The latter may be raised either from general municipal revenues or through a levy on the property and business tax base.

One more level of government, one more level of taxation for the next century. Madam Minister, municipalities have been finding ways to cooperate with one another without the province establishing a whole new level of government. Why is this necessary, and how much is this going to cost the Saskatchewan taxpayer in the next century?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has got it all wrong. He says, in his question, one more level of government. So by implication he is arguing that what he wants to support is 860 different forms of government in Saskatchewan, larger than Ontario. That is what he says is the case.

The services district Act, and way the Bill is tabled, is as I say a voluntary effort for the people of Saskatchewan who will do this. I know, not withstanding misrepresentation of the Conservatives opposite, they will build for their sons and daughter of tomorrow. They will build an infrastructure which is sustainable and supportable. They will have the public services for the 21st century that we can afford and that best reflect the values of the people of this province — no matter how many times and how he misrepresents the letter that is there.

That is the fact and we're going to work our way through this the way we always have in Saskatchewan — through a cooperative spirit of tackling the future proudly and boldly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Government Administrative Costs

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. And, Mr. Premier, I was at SARM convention this morning.

Mr. Speaker, in front of about 1,500 SARM delegates today, the Premier indicated that municipal governments spend as much as 46 per cent of their funding on administration. However SARM's own figures clearly show that 90 per cent of

RM funding is directed to maintaining rural roads. And the vast majority of municipal governments in this province, including those which I've served on, run on a bare-bones budget.

Does the Premier actually believe that our municipal leaders are directing almost half of their funding for administrative purposes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this negligent misrepresentation of the facts and the statement of course just undermines the hon. member's credibility. He knows full well what I said; I repeated it several times in the written text and I've shown the journalists. I said — I don't have the text in front of me — the effect of it is that in some urban communities in the setting that we're talking about — they're urban technically under SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) but they are in a rural setting — just as the figure I gave a moment ago, the percentage which is dedicated to overhead is 46 per cent. For communities of 100 or less the average is 46 per cent . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Name two. I'll name . . . for between 100 and 250 the overhead percentage is 42 per cent. And the hon. members are saying to me: name two, name three. What kind of an argument is this? Are you in favour of standing for a position where 42 to 46 per cent of the communities of 250 population or less goes to overhead when it should be going to services of the local governments? That's what I said.

This is not an RM versus urban issue. This is a local governance issue, both rural and urban. We're all Saskatchewan people. We're all in the same boat together, and we had better come to grips with providing the best public infrastructure our province can provide for our people, or you, sir, and all the politicians, will pay a big price for it if we don't.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, if I misread what the Premier's comments were this morning, I had about 1,499 other people that joined in with that misconception.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier's statement this morning is a clear indication to all municipal leaders in this province how clearly out of touch he is with local governments. This provincial government could clearly take a lesson from our municipal leaders. Had the Premier actually spoken with the reeves and councillors instead of speaking to them today, he would have known better.

Will the Premier admit that funds are not being wasted by our municipal governments, urban or rural, and that there are no great savings to be made through amalgamation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — What I find absolutely mind-boggling, to be very blunt about this, Mr. Speaker, is that that hon. member would say that the people of the province of Saskatchewan, with a record number of 831 municipalities and governments, more than — sorry, 847 — more than Ontario, that this is a system that he would argue is the system which will save rural Saskatchewan and the infrastructure of Saskatchewan for the 21st century. That is what he is saying. Even the people at SARM and SUMA don't buy into that, not for the moment, not for the moment.

We have no solutions that we want to impose upon them. All we want to say to them, as we say to you, is to join us in building for the future. You can't look at a situation which was started in 1900 and 1905 and virtually remains unchanged in 1996 and say, no change at all. Where in the world do you people come from? What planet do you come from? What world do you live in? What year do you live in?

The whole world is under change and you're going to have to do it either under the values of Saskatchewan or by standing still. You're going to allow every province to bypass this province, and we for this side are not going to allow ourselves to do that. I guarantee that to be the case.

And I might also say, if the Leader of the Opposition would just sit down while I finish, it is about time that the Liberal . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Time has expired. Next question.

Video Lottery Terminal Revenues

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just to clarify that there are credible people on this side of the House as well, Mr. Speaker.

Once again this week, Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government blatantly break a promise it made before and during the election campaign. The $10 million promised to municipalities has been withdrawn. There's no question about that.

My question to the Minister of Finance is: on Monday we heard the Municipal Affairs minister state that this VLT money that has been taken from the municipalities will be used to fund health and education in our province. We also heard her state that a small portion of this $10 million will be used to fund a province-wide 9-1-1 system.

Will the minister commit today, that in subsequent years the municipalities' portion of VLT revenues will be earmarked specifically for the education of our children or for health care, or does she maintain the municipalities' money will be dumped into the General Revenue Fund where it can be used to pay for anything from a bloated cabinet to more political staff for the members opposite? Can she assure the people of Saskatchewan, who must pay the price for that government's broken promises, measures will be taken to ensure this money will in fact be used for health and education in our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the member knows, and the member would know if he had any experience in local government, that it is impossible to budget with dedicated taxes. You couldn't run a municipality by saying, we're going to use half a mill for gravel, three-quarters of a mill for culverts, you know, a mill for roads, two mills for regional, you know. And if we have to put these all in dedicated funds and we can't use it for anything else. The way municipalities mill rate . . . set their mill rate is to establish the total needs, their overall budget, and then they set their mill rate based on that. And then they have the flexibility to switch from one area of spending to another as priorities emerge.

Governments are exactly the same. We don't collect one tax and say this is for roads; this is for health; this is for education. We have a budget which reflects the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan, being health, education, and our social services. And that is where we have promised that we will maintain, sustain, the level of service, and that is how the money is allocated. No government can function on conditional financing and dedicated funds. And the members, if they had any experience in government, would know that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 18 — An Act to enable direct reduction of the Provincial Debt

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting measures to enable the direct reduction of the Provincial Debt be introduced and read the first time.

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Yesterday the member for Saskatoon Southeast raised a point of order concerning whether the member for Melfort-Tisdale could table documents during the private members' statements period. At the time I advised the Assembly that I would consider the point before ruling, and I am now prepared to rule on that matter.

Contrary to the custom or standing orders of many other parliaments, members of the Legislative Assembly are permitted by practice to table documents in the course of debate. This is pointed out very early in the legislative history of this Assembly in a ruling of the Speaker made in 1924. In that ruling, the Speaker stated that while the tabling of documents was in order to permit reference to be made to it during debate, it should not appear as a sessional paper.

Consequently for the last 72 years it has continued to be the practice of the Assembly to accept documents at the Table which have no official or statutory requirement to be tabled. Such documents, however, are not minuted nor do they enjoy any official status. Subsequently the practice evolved to include not only documents tabled in debate but documents tabled in the course of other proceedings, such as question period. The tabling of documents during the private members' statement period falls within contemporary practice. Therefore I find the member's point of order not well taken.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Boyd: — Before orders of the day, I have a rule 46 that I would like to move, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I'll ask the Leader of the Third Party to briefly explain to the House the reason why it should be considered as a priority item, and the motion that he proposes to present.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

McDowell Committee

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, I stand pursuant to rule 46, and I truly believe we must debate an issue of great importance to the Saskatchewan people and to the reputation of all elected members here today.

One year ago, approximately, all three parties agreed to appoint an independent committee to review and make recommendations regarding the salaries, per diems, and other rules which MLAs must follow.

We all did this in order to become more accountable to the people of this province and we all agreed to accept the recommendations, whatever they may be, that the McDowell commission would bring forward. Mr. Speaker, the committee recommended several changes and stated these changes should come into effect January 1 of '96.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this hasn't happened. And as a result, I believe that the integrity of MLAs is at stake. We are all under fire, Mr. Speaker, because some members don't want to recommend . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member is outlining a background and I understand that, but I will ask him to very succinctly — order — I will ask the member to very succinctly proceed immediately now to describe why he feels it should be considered as a priority item, and then advise specifically the motion that he wishes to have considered by the Assembly.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anything less than this is an affront to the Saskatchewan taxpayers, Saskatchewan families, and the reputations of this institution.

Therefore, I move the following motion:

> That this Assembly urge the government, as previously agreed by all parties in the Legislative Assembly, to accept all of the recommendations brought forward by the independent McDowell commission, and further that the recommendations be implemented retroactively to January

1 ’96, as recommended at the outset by the McDowell commission.

And I ask leave to start this debate.

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Convert.

The Speaker: — I convert to motions for return (debatable). Order, order. Order, order.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Cuts to Federal Transfer Payments

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, it’s a great pleasure to enter this debate and to discuss the motion.

Mr. Speaker, if you said to Canadians today, what makes us distinctive, what makes us different than Americans, what is so essential to our very high quality of life in Canada, the answer would be that we have a universal health care system across this country, that we have a social safety net that prevails in every province, and that our children can have access to education no matter what their financial circumstances.

And in maintaining this very fundamental part of our sense of Canadian identity, the federal government has historically played a key role. It’s played a role first of all in providing money for these programs. It is the federal government that collects the majority of taxes in Canada, and therefore it’s appropriate that the federal government funnel money back through the provinces to fund these absolutely essential programs.

The other key role the federal government has played is in setting national standards, in ensuring that across this vast land, no matter what the politics of a particular provincial government, there are rules; there are minimum standards that apply when it comes to welfare or when it comes to health care.

All of this, Mr. Speaker, is threatened and is being jeopardized by some of the decisions taken recently by the federal government.

First of all, I want to make it clear that this province, this government, is not concerned about the federal government reducing its deficit. Quite the contrary. We applaud the federal government for reducing its deficit — we actually wish that they would balance their books — and we applaud them for reducing spending.

Our concerns are different concerns. First of all, our concern that they have no plan. They have absolutely no vision as to what health care or welfare or post-secondary education is going to look like in Canada in the next century.

Now I must admit they started down the road of suggesting they might have a plan. They announced that there would be social security reform to look at ways to restructure our social security system under Minister Axworthy They very quickly though dropped that idea, retreated from that sense of plan and vision, and went back to an approach of merely cutting.

Mr. Speaker, what I would do is I would contrast what’s happening at the federal level — cut, hack, slash and in the end some day we’ll find out what we’ve got left — to what we did in this province. Mr. Speaker, in 1991 when we became the government and we looked at our health care system and we said, you know, this health care system the way it’s structured is not affordable, it’s not sustainable into the next century, we didn’t just start hacking and slashing at it and hope some day something would fall out of the system that would be acceptable. We put before the people of Saskatchewan a vision, a plan of a new health care system that would be affordable, effective and sustainable into the next century.

So our first concern is, the federal government is cutting and cutting deeply with absolutely no plan or vision as to what these fundamental programs are going to look like in the next century.

Our second concern is that they’ve retreated entirely from the role of setting national standards. In the area of social programs there is only one standard with respect to welfare; that is, you can’t deny welfare to somebody from another province. There are simply no other standards that exist.

In the area of health care, they’re trying to have it both ways. They’re trying to say to people, we’re still interested in maintaining national standards even though our funding, which used to be about 50 per cent of the cost of health care, has dropped dramatically. So our second concern then has to do with the fact that they have abandoned the idea of having national standards that apply across Canada.

Our final, and probably our most fundamental concern, is what the federal government is doing to funding for health, education, and social programs.

(1430)

You know, Mr. Speaker, Paul Martin, the Minister of Finance in Ottawa, once said, Finance ministers are the most rational people in all governments. I don’t know if I agree with that, but what I do agree with is it’s very hard to get Finance ministers irate. I can tell you, the federal Minister of Finance has Finance ministers irate from one part of Canada to another part of Canada for what we call fiddling with figures. Let me read you a quote from the western Finance ministers’ report, November 1995. This is a report endorsed by all the governments in western Canada and the two northern governments. And we say quite directly: the federal government is making misleading statements about the magnitude of the social program transfer cuts contained in the 1995 federal government.

Mr. Speaker, for ministers who are very reluctant to be that blunt, this is pretty hard language. They’re saying the federal

government is fiddling with figures, trying to say if you'd only take these cuts and look at them through this angle, you'd find they weren't really as dramatic as what you think. And the ministers go on to say: the cuts to health, education, social programs are dramatic, even devastating.

Let me just give you some idea of what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. Between 1994 and the end of this century, when the cuts actually do stop, the federal government is cutting its own overall government spending by less than 11 per cent. Yet in that same time period, they're cutting spending or financing for health, education, and social programs by more than 35 per cent. So cut your overall government by 11 per cent, but cut the programs Canadians care about the most — their health programs, their social programs, their post-secondary education — cut that by 35 per cent.

There is a number that is worse than this, and it is, as my colleague says, a number that is appropriate to say "shame" when you hear it.

In the 1996-97 federal budget, a full 73 per cent of all the cuts in that budget are cuts to health, education, social programs. So, Mr. Speaker, what the federal government has said — because budgets reflect values — the federal government has said in 1996-97 we have to reduce spending. The area that we want to reduce spending in most dramatically — because it's 73 per cent of all of our cuts — is funding for health, education, and social programs, funding that matters most to Canadians.

What would happen, Mr. Speaker, if a province like Saskatchewan said well, as the members opposite said to us, you now know the picture; get on with it? What would happen if we just passed through to the health boards, to the people in education, to the people who receive social programs, all of the federal cuts? We'd just say, they're federal cuts. They're aimed at your program. Here they are.

Mr. Speaker, we've done enough work on our budget that I can tell you exactly what would happen, not just in Saskatchewan but all across Canada, if these cuts were passed through in their entirety.

Mr. Speaker, we would have to slash our welfare rates and entitlements to such an extent that we would have homeless people across this province and we would go very quickly toward an American-style society with a massive underclass of people. Mr. Speaker, if we pass through the health care cuts in their entirety, it would mean the end — the end — of the medicare system as we have known it. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has spoken out many times about what these cuts would mean to the average person, but so have people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I must say I was shocked to hear the provincial Liberals welcome the 1996-97 federal budget as a fair and compassionate budget — a budget in which 73 per cent of all the cuts are cuts to health, education, and social programs. I was particularly distressed that they weren't even listening to what their own constituents were saying to them.

And I quote now from some letters. These are letters written to Paul Martin, as Minister of Finance, saying please, please understand what these cuts are going to mean to our programs. And they were copied to me and they were copied to the members opposite. And I have contacted the people involved and they have given me permission to read some of their comments in the legislature.

The first comment comes from the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek District Health Board — the health board in the riding of the Liberal opposition critic. And they write to the federal Minister of Finance:

> We are concerned that the magnitude of the anticipated reductions in federal transfer payments to the province of Saskatchewan will erode the nature and intent of the Canada Health Act.

What they're saying is these cuts will mean that we as a health board can no longer maintain a universally accessible health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the Living Sky Health District wrote and said:

> As a district health board, we are appealing to you, the federal minister, to reconsider the impact and consequences of further reductions in transfer payments to the province of Saskatchewan which will result in very negative implications on our health care system.

The Saskatoon District Health Board talked about the cuts to health care imposed by the federal government as significant and potentially devastating to their health care system.

Mr. Speaker, politics is about making choices. When governments make choices, they reveal their true colours. They tell people what their true values are.

Mr. Speaker, what we now know is that Liberals, whether they are Liberals in Ottawa or Liberals in the opposition in this House, find it acceptable when they are short of money to take the biggest grab of money from health, education, and social programs — programs that Canadians hold dearly.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by saying this. The federal Finance minister has tried to discredit our numbers. He is trying to do this because he is trying to ensure that we do not continue speaking out about what they're doing to health, education, and social programing. I will say this to him and to the members opposite. The government and the people of Saskatchewan will continue to speak out when we have governments that take the biggest cuts out of health, education, and social programs.

This government, the people of this province, have a far different vision of Canada than the members opposite or the federal Finance minister. Our vision of Canada is a vision where everyone can have access to the core of health care services without needing a credit card. Our vision is of a Canada where students can go to get post-secondary education whether they come from rich families or poor families. Our vision is a vision of a Canada where there is a social safety net

in place when any of us fall on troubled times. This is the kind of Canada we believe in. This is the kind of Canada we will continue to fight for; and this is the kind of Canada that has made this country the best place in the whole world in which to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The minister may want to formally move the motion so that the debate can proceed.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I move:

> That this Legislative Assembly shares the government's concern that 73 per cent of the cuts in the 1996-97 federal budget are cuts in cash transfers to provinces for health, education, and social programs; furthermore, reductions in federal funding for health, education and social programs continue into the next century; therefore, we call on the federal government to consider a national plan that ends these cuts and protects national standards and basic services.

The Speaker: — Is there a seconder?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Seconded by the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and support this very important motion, and I urge the members opposite to join with us and remind them through you that it is their responsibility to stand up for Saskatchewan people. That's our primary responsibility here, not to apologize for Ottawa for the kind of cut-back that has been outlined by the Minister of Finance, which are the true figures; because if there's any dispute in that, Mr. Speaker, I do have a copy from *The Globe and Mail* of the projected cuts for Saskatchewan until the year 2003.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think that all members would recognize and are well aware that it took about 40, 50, 60 years to develop the social safety net in this country. And that was developed over time by successive federal and provincial governments — of all political stripes, quite honestly — progressing towards a safety net and an arrangement of sort of financial supports for those who were vulnerable and needed that kind of support. And these are complex arrangements because they involve different jurisdictional responsibilities and so on. But it took 40, 50 years to develop these very important programs and all parties have contributed.

I might say that a lot of the emphasis for some of the programs, which is well recognized in Canada, did come from people like Woodsworth and Stanley Knowles and Tommy Douglas and Grace McInnis and so on. So I think that our party certainly has a proud tradition of contributing to Canada's safety net and to national standards.

And certainly Saskatchewan as a province — which is a credit to all the people — Saskatchewan as a province is recognized for having of course been the pioneers in medicare; but not only medicare, in educational reform under Lloyd, and even before Lloyd, and the social income security programs where we've been a social policy innovator. That's been recognized. So I think Saskatchewan people have substantially contributed.

My point, Mr. Speaker, being though that over time Canada has developed a positive international image. It is our social programs that have defined us, that are the essence of Canada, as the Minister of Finance said, that distinguishes us from our friends to the south where 47 million Americans have no health care, for example. Now that's not the kind of society that we want.

But we have a good reputation as a caring nation, as being socially progressive. And this is our identity. And this is defined recently by the United Nations. And the reason being that we . . . up until recently, the number of low income people, poor people, living in Canada was less than anywhere else. And of course the worry that we have is that the accelerated rate of poverty in Canada is increasing, which is a concern of groups across the country and, quite frankly, is a concern of some communities in the United Nations as well because they had seen Canada as a model in the past.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is at stake here is not only our international reputation . . . by the magnitude of the federal cuts and the fact that there is no national plan. So we see already a patchwork quilt developing. We know it's happening in Alberta. We know that B.C. (British Columbia) brought in residential requirements. We know that, I think today or yesterday it was announced, that Manitoba is cutting welfare rates by 10 per cent. I will support that.

We're the only province in the last three or four years that hasn't cut money from the poorest of the poor. And we're very proud of that. But it's getting very, very difficult to continue to maintain those programs in the face of these massive offloads. But that's what we predicted would happen when the federal government announced their process, which hasn't really been a process of involving Canadian people, is that when you take away national standards or allow those to erode, provinces are going to do what they have to do, and there's different philosophical views and so on. But in Manitoba's defence and to B.C. defence, they're having to make those kinds of choices because of the massive offloading I would say over the last two or three years to western Canada and what's being proposed for the future, Mr. Speaker.

Now this deterioration of federal responsibility started out of the Mulroney government. Well first of all we understand that because there's not a philosophical commitment by Tories to looking after their neighbours. There isn't a commitment to do that. They also accelerated this process by deregulation and unilateral offloads in terms of their responsibilities by constitution to treaty Indians and the first round of the UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) cuts and so on.

And so the Tories started the process because they're not committed to social programs anyway, as Grant Schmidt wasn't

committed to meaningful, compassionate, responsible welfare reform in the mid-80s here. He wasn't committed to that. As late as 1980, Beattie Martin, the former minister of the families said that poverty wasn't a problem in Saskatchewan or Canada. So they don't understand that. But, Mr. Speaker, the troubling aspect here is that not only did the federal Liberals continue with the Mulroney policies of dismantling the safety net, they've actually accelerated it.

(1445)

They accelerated it with unilateral treaty offloads again, shirking their responsibilities with respect to first nations. They've now had two rounds of UIC cuts. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite and the Liberal benches wouldn't know, except the House Leader would, and the speaker . . . the leader that was evicted by the current caucus, they wouldn't know, but we tried to get the Liberal caucus to join us some time ago over the last three or four years to object to these cuts and they wouldn't do it. Because they weren't standing up for Saskatchewan people; they were apologizing for Ottawa. And that's exactly what we're seeing here by this current opposition Liberal group.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the very first meeting. I was very excited when I went to the first ministers' meeting of Social Services ministers with Mr. Axworthy, about two years ago now, because he was talking about a process that was going to unfold involving ministers from across the country, social groups, all the stakeholders, all the people that had some interest in income security reform.

And, Mr. Speaker, that process just simply hasn't unfolded. Why? Because Ottawa has chosen to say that the provinces can't get their act together and that they're not united. Mr. Speaker, the three conferences that I went to, we had joint communiqués at every one where there was an incredible amount of unanimity among the provinces. But the federal government was not committed to meaningful income security reform in the first place, so chose to pick one province off one at a time, and that's exactly the way the process is unfolding.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is not national leadership. That is not even befitting the Reform Party's approach, which is to sort of . . . they have no interest at all in national unity. But the Reform Party couldn't have done any worse in terms of accelerating the rate to dismantle the country in the social policy area. But there's no process and they've continued to make unilateral decisions. The one that concerns me . . . well, they all concern me — the cuts to health care; a $31 million cut to training spaces in education this year. How on earth are we going to have a competitive workforce if the federal government isn't even part of that?

Mr. Speaker, the one that concerns me from my background is the phasing out, the elimination of the Canada Assistance Plan, for at least people had five basic rights by citizenship no matter where they lived in Canada. Now that is gone. That has gone, and it's been replaced with nothing, Mr. Speaker. And that's a tragedy. That is an absolute tragedy. And we're going to see provinces with more punitive governments continue to make the kind of choices that are not consistent with our image historically.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that there is a lot of rhetoric in the federal budget. There was a lot of rhetoric there about helping people, helping poor people. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the federal deficit fighting has been on the backs of poor people — $2.5 billion already just on UIC, Mr. Speaker, and another $7 billion in social programs.

Now why on earth would a government make those kinds of massive cuts to programs that affect young people, seniors, many women who live in poverty? Where their child care promise is, nobody knows. It appears to me that it's gone. A $750 million red book promise on child care appears to be gone. Now that is going to have incredible implications for single parent moms and others who are trying to get out of the poverty trap.

Mr. Speaker, it is foolish to cut by 35 per cent in these areas. We will pay big time. We will pay big time on health care costs, on poverty, on more institutions filled with . . . jails filled with young offenders and persons in prison. And, Mr. Speaker, this is an incredible waste in human potential.

And I think that the federal Liberal government has missed a golden opportunity to reform the income security system because all provinces were ready. Canadians were ready. They were looking for some leadership in a process outlined by the federal government.

And I know that the Liberals opposite would have to admit that there is no process; there has been no process to address the issue of income security review. There has only been unilateral cuts. They have not kept their promises on maintaining the integrity of health, education, and social service programs. And they have not kept their promise on day care. They have not kept their promise on a process, a meaningful process, that would involve Canadians.

So, Mr. Speaker, I join with the Minister of Finance in saying that we don't want the American style in Canada. They are great neighbours, but we're different. And that's recognized across the country. We don't want to be the Alabama of the North. That is not what we stand for.

So we can't support that, Mr. Speaker. And therefore I would urge all members to get up and join us and send a united message from Saskatchewan to Ottawa. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and respond to the motion presented by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a couple of months since I met with the minister. I want to thank her for that opportunity to discuss things like the transfer payment issue that is before us today. I would like to remind the minister that if she has any questions of me, she can make an appointment with me any time.

In the motion before this House, Mr. Speaker, the minister once again blames the federal government for this government's problems. The minister says that 73 per cent of the cuts in the recent federal budget were made to transfer payments. She also says that there is no plan to stop the decline of these transfers.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have yet another Oscar whining performance from the minister. The minister might be the Meryl Streep of this House, but her colleagues are no underachievers either. If they're lucky, the rest of the members opposite might just be up for the best theme for the chorus of whining and blaming they've put up with in recent months.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the basic problem with the Minister of Finance's motion is that it continues to blame someone else, Finance's motion continues to blame someone else, and it's always easier for this government to blame someone else — blame them for their problems — instead of taking responsibility and just getting down to solving the problems that face this province.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, that the minister quit blaming and just get on the job and do it for the people of Saskatchewan. I'm sure that the members of the third party are pleased to see that they are no longer the scapegoats for everything that the government thinks is wrong with the province. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope this government shows the third party the courtesy of thanking them for playing that role for the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, this government complains, whines, and blames the federal government for its problems. If the members opposite would take a look at some of the budget documents provided by the federal government, they would soon discover that the federal budget was quite fair to Saskatchewan.

If they would look at page 58 of the budget briefing book, Mr. Speaker, it shows that the total entitlement, or all the money given to Saskatchewan, will drop by $62 million between 1995-96 and '96-97.

In the following year, the total amount of transfer monies we will receive from the federal government will drop by another $60 million. It's much less than the figures that have been thrown around by the minister.

Mr. Speaker, these total entitlements include all the money transferred to Saskatchewan by way of equalization, tax room vacated for the provinces, as well as cash transfers. Now when I met with the Minister of Finance, she said that these equalization payments and tax points shouldn't count. As a result of this position, Mr. Speaker, she doesn't use them in her numbers.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if equalization and tax points aren't important, then I challenge the minister to turn the money they produce over to the universities, technical institutes, school boards, health districts, and municipalities whose budgets she is threatening to cut.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — If she feels so strongly that these transfers don't count, give the money they provide to someone who knows they count.

In terms of sheer size of government spending, the cuts to federal transfers are certainly manageable. These cuts should not have the massive impact that the minister is saying they will have.

Mr. Speaker, certainly given that the government program spending is about $5 billion, they can handle such a small cut. If one looks in terms of overall spending by this government, including Crown corporations which page 27 of the Provincial Auditor's fall report reveals is about 8.6 billion, a cut of 62 million is quite small.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers used by the minister, however, are not really the issue. The issue here is about blaming. It just has to stop. The official opposition sincerely hopes that the blaming we see here today will not be repeated when this government brings down its budget on the 28th of this month.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — The real issue here, Mr. Speaker, is this government's inability to create economic development and jobs. With economic development and jobs, this province can deal with the problems in this province in the Saskatchewan way. We'll solve our problems instead of whining about them.

If members opposite would take a little bit of time off from blaming and take a close look at the fiscal arrangements between the federal government, they will soon learn that the province would benefit in two ways from getting down to solving the real problems facing Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, if we had more jobs in this province, we would not only have fewer people on assistance but it would directly benefit the funding of health, education, and social services.

As I said earlier, part of the overall transfer to the province includes tax room. As our economy grows, so will the money produced from these tax points vacated to us by the federal government.

More jobs and more economic activity means more revenue directly for health care, education, and social assistance. According to page 56 of the budget briefing book, the federal government estimates that the tax room, or tax points to the province, will continue to produce more revenue. Even with this government's sorry job-creation record, the federal government estimates that economic growth in this province will help bring in more money for health, education, and social services through these tax points.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998-99 estimates, this tax room will be worth some $418 million to Saskatchewan. By 2002-2003, they expect this to grow to be worth $487 million. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, the amount of money that Saskatchewan has available for health, education, and social services, can grow if our

economy grows and produces more jobs.

Instead of pursuing this aggressively, the government spends all their time, wasting all of their time, blaming others. That behaviour, Mr. Speaker, won't do anything to put anyone to work and it won't do anything to preserve our treasured social programs.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister told the people of Saskatchewan back in 1994 that if we had too much activity we would lose out on equalization payments. We would get less overall transfers. Well this sort of attitude is certainly not the Saskatchewan way of doing things. It's not the work ethic, the sense of independence, and sacrifice that built this province.

(1500)

Her remarks are also interesting in that on one occasion she tells us that these equalization payments are not relevant; and she goes around saying that they are so relevant she'd prefer to have them before seeing the unemployed get work and start paying more taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we have 4,000 fewer jobs in this province than at this time a year ago. This government can say the situation is not that bad by pointing back in time, but it fails to remove some real human suffering. It also fails to put this province back on the right direction of trying to create more jobs.

Mr. Speaker, once in a while this government seems to start thinking that creating jobs is the way to get real financial freedom. A couple of weeks ago they introduced another economic development strategy paper. A strategy might work, however, if only the government would stick to it and have a coherent plan. Unfortunately one hand doesn't know what the other is doing.

We have a government going out and telling everyone they want jobs, but their Crown corporations and other departments are off doing something else. They want jobs, but they go and create laws that make it difficult for business to survive. They jack up indirect taxes through utilities. Last year they hiked a number of nuisance fees on business, and they let the Workers' Compensation attempt to impose debt charges and annual increases that were beyond what was expected. They increased the sales tax by 2 per cent, even though they condemned these very same tax measures by the previous government.

Despite complaining about the 2 per cent flat tax imposed by the Tories, they came up with a new tax of their own. They introduced the deficit reduction surtax of 10 per cent and later renamed it the debt reduction surtax, just to add to the hypocrisy. All these efforts, Mr. Speaker, make it more difficult for people here to stay in this province or to create jobs. Without jobs there will be no financial freedom.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might also care to argue that they provided some petty tax breaks that will help small business. They might also try and remind us that last year they offered another petty tax break to the rest of us on the debt reduction surtax. Despite these things, Mr. Speaker, we still pay far too much in taxes, and it's killing jobs in this province. The Premier once said, taxes are the silent killer of jobs. And I think this is sound advice.

If you look to page 92 of last year's budget, as well as page 25 of the auditor's fall report, Mr. Speaker, it shows something quite scary about this government. Between 1990-91 and 1995-96, the amount of revenue this government takes from us in taxes has grown by 33 per cent. In dollar terms it's gone from 1.988 billion to 2.671 billion. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if many families around this province can say that their incomes have grown by 33 per cent over the last five years.

What this all shows, Mr. Speaker, is that after some shiny new strategies and a lot of talk on behalf of this government, the fewer people who are working are just paying more taxes. Mr. Speaker, these high taxes are hurting our ability to create jobs that will help secure the social programs that the minister refers to in her motion.

It is also quite ironic that they would be so intent on blaming the federal government about their revenue problems for a small cut when their overall take from tax revenue has grown by 33 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Finance is so upset about a small but fair cut to transfers from the federal government when her tax revenues have grown so much, what does this say? It tells us taxpayers that we should expect that she'll break her promise to provide a further extension of the debt reduction tax break that she promised in last year's budget. If all promises are on hold, then this one must also be on the table, Mr. Speaker.

Recently an economist from the University of Saskatchewan, a Professor Eric Howe, suggested that our economy should be going full out with high grain and resource prices. But yet we are only producing modest growth and even fewer jobs. He suggests our economy would be doing much better if it weren't for the overtaxation and overregulation coming from this government. Mr. Speaker, not only are high taxes standing in the way of us getting the growth and jobs we need to secure our social programs for ourselves; the economic strategy of this government is not helping improve anything.

Mr. Speaker, this government condemned the previous government for wasting money on trade trips around the world. Their slogan was, the ministers get the trips; the taxpayers get the bill. Well the only thing that's changed is that the cab taking the minister to the airport pulls up in front of the Condie castle instead of in front of a humble bungalow. The trips are just as wasteful as they ever were and are doing precious little to create jobs and help us secure our social programs.

Mr. Speaker, last summer for example the minister travelled to South America, just in time to catch the end of the ski season in Santiago. Mr. Speaker, the minister took the president of SaskEnergy with him on this trip. Curiously enough, this civil servant had to go all the way to Chile to meet officials from Alberta-based NOVA Corp. This seems like a huge waste. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, the president of SaskEnergy felt it was safer to travel all the way to Chile than risk driving to Alberta

on the highways that this government has let fall apart over the last four years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — The minister also had to arrange a meeting with Gearbulk Shipping in Rio De Janeiro. Here's a company that has brokers in an office in Vancouver that one can just phone, but I suspect it's just a lot more exciting to go to Rio.

Mr. Speaker, there is more waste. If this government spent less time blaming and rid itself of this waste, there would not be a problem with transfer payments. On that same trip, Mr. Speaker, the schedule was set up so that there would be two weekend layovers, the last of which was in Santiago, Chile. Instead of working on the weekend, the minister scheduled a whole weekend for travel and just a couple of meetings. The minister's flight to Chile from Argentina took just two hours on any of four airlines. Why did he need to waste this weekend holidaying rather than working? This holiday plan the government has disguised as an economic strategy will do precious little for economic growth in this province.

Mr. Speaker, before this government wastes any more effort whining about federal transfers, it should clean up its own waste. This government promised the people of Saskatchewan that it would reduce administrative waste in the government by $40 million over four years. Even though this promise is all too modest, this government can't seem to even accomplish this. It seems like they are more likely to cut front line staff that deliver services to the public before they cut their own waste.

Since getting back in office, they've expanded the size of cabinet, added political staff, added a department and another deputy minister. Mr. Speaker, they spent over $600,000 on a utility rate review when they already knew that they were going to let Jack Messer raise our power rates anyhow. They spent another $50,000 having SaskEnergy go out and hold public meetings to ask if they could lower the power rates. They topped this off with a $30,000 TV address to the people of Saskatchewan and $100,000 pre-budget consultation when they already knew what they were going to do.

Mr. Speaker, while they complain about federal transfers, there's even more waste to report. We now hear that the closure of the Plains hospital could result in even more expense to the people of Saskatchewan. Needed renovations, which were the basis of the province's decision to force the board to close the facility, will likely be done anyhow so the government can put the building to some new use. In the last year with its cost overruns, this government blew another 37 million on a casino. If that wasn't bad enough, they are now giving $80 to bus tour gamblers coming to the casino.

Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't be surprised by this sort of give away however. It's coming from a government that's willing to give more and more tax breaks to the 141st largest corporation in Canada in Husky Oil. We shouldn't be surprised when they give breaks to one of the largest banks in the country to build a call centre. Mr. Speaker, it appears to the average person in this province that a bank with a billion dollar plus in profits shouldn't need any breaks from us. If this province had a good environment for economic growth, these give-aways wouldn't be necessary.

Mr. Speaker, on the latter point the members opposite are doing the exact opposite of the federal government. While they give breaks to huge, profitable banks, the federal government is taking the advice of average working people and continuing to slap an additional tax on the banks in the upcoming year.

Mr. Speaker, it has become quite clear that the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance is quite flawed in its logic. It exposes much of the hypocrisy of this government. In recent weeks, this sort of hypocrisy has been taken to new heights. The government says its number 1 priority is job creation, yet all we have heard is that they are planning on cutting hard at SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) and our universities.

Mr. Speaker, taking away education will remove the tools people need to get jobs. To secure our social programs, we need jobs, and Saskatchewan people are not going to get them this way. They're not going to get jobs if this government keeps gutting rural Saskatchewan. They're not going to get jobs if this government keeps overtaxing the mom and pop operations that employ most of the people in this province. They're not going to get jobs if this government keeps wasting our tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that this government needs to quit blaming other people for its problems. The problem is not the transfer payments referred to in the motion. It's our slow moving economy.

In the latter part of her motion, the Minister of Finance suggests that there needs to be a plan with regard to federal transfer payments. Well, Mr. Speaker, the federal government gave out a plan in last year's budget. In 1994 they assured the people in have-not provinces that equalization transfers would not be subject to deficit reduction cuts like other programs. This was a great benefit to provinces like ours. Lastly, in this year's budget they had laid out a plan to provide stable funding and a cash floor on health, education, and social assistance transfers until the year 2002-2003.

Mr. Speaker, let's compare this briefly with the actions of the members opposite. On page 30 of their election platform, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite promised that under their plan, and I quote: They will provide a stable, multi-year, provincial funding environment for key public services like health, education, and municipal government.

(1515)

Less than a year later, every promise that has ever been made has been thrown out the window. Mr. Speaker, this government threw promises like this out the window because they said they didn't know what would be in the federal budget. This government knew what was in store for them for transfers in '95-96 at least a year ago. When the budget came down, there were no surprises.

Mr. Speaker, the Dominion Bond Rating Service said that these cuts were expected and that they should not have a serious impact on the fiscal outlook. This government hung its hat on the Dominion Bond Rating Service report a year ago, and they went on to say since, that it's no longer relevant. A few short weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, the minister changed her tune again and finally admitted that the federal government had given her ample notice of cuts to transfer payments. The minister was quoted in the paper about these cuts, saying: let me say something positive about the federal government for a change. At least we've had a number of months; we can respond. How quickly the positives were forgotten and the blaming resumed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if you compare the record of the federal government to the record of the hastily breaking funding promises by this government, the members opposite do not stack up very well. I think members opposite would agree that it's downright silly for them to criticize another level of government that's honouring its funding promises and meeting its targets when this government can't keep its own.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — If anything, now that the members opposite know what they will be getting in federal transfers until the year 2002-2003, they should come up with a plan outlining the level of transfers they intend to make to the universities, SIAST, the school boards, health districts, and municipalities for the same period.

Mr. Speaker, on a final point, in her motion the minister alludes to the fact that cuts to transfers were larger in comparison to cuts in other parts of federal spending. Mr. Speaker, in saying this the minister and her colleagues are missing some simple facts. There is only one taxpayer. That taxpayer still has to deal with a federal deficit and debt. Unfortunately for all, the federal government must spend about $47 billion every year just to pay interest on our massive debt. That's almost one-third of their overall spending, and it gives them little room to manoeuvre.

While the federal government had little room to manoeuvre, I am sure all members of this House can be thankful that, despite deep defence cuts, we still have a military base in Saskatchewan. That base, Mr. Speaker, employs over 1,155 people in this province.

I am sure that all the members of this House are also pleased that the federal government is doing its best to secure those jobs for years to come by promoting the 15 Wing Moose Jaw as a possible site for basic and advanced flight training for other NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member countries.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Before this government blames the federal government, that had little room to manoeuvre, it should look at its own massive debt carrying costs. According to page 27 of the auditor's fall report, the interest expenses to Saskatchewan for all government activity are $1.667 billion dollars. This is more than we spend on health care.

If this government would take steps to improve Crown corporation accountability and deal with our growing pension liabilities, these could be reduced. Reducing the amount of money this government throws away on interest costs would make it easier to reduce taxes, create jobs, and would make the small cut in overall transfers, as we are discussing here today, all the more manageable.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance. I believe this motion should be rephrased. In that light, I move that the motion be amended such:

> That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:
>
> urge this government to refrain from blaming the federal budget and direct its efforts towards creating jobs and encouraging the economic growth needed to secure the social programs treasured by all Saskatchewan residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly oppose the attempts of the opposition to take the federal government off the hook on this matter.

The hon. member from Thunder Creek's speech was as unfocused as the federal budget. And I might add that it contained everything except the kitchen sink. But it also revealed an absence of any notion of the change and the magnitude of change that we're involved in in this province and across this country.

I might refer back to a *Tribune* article of Tuesday, February 13, an editorial comment: why does the member from Thunder Creek want to defend the federal Liberals? The long and short is that Chrétien and his Liberals have slashed and burned social programs and agricultural support programs at a rate that makes Mulroney look like a spendthrift. Post-secondary education and health are a federal matter, and the feds have to take full responsibility for the mess those two programs are in.

I'll remind the members opposite that the alternative to change is no change, and to do nothing is to go back to the deficit and debt treadmill that we were on. And so it might be useful to direct one's efforts to thinking about change rather than producing grocery lists of topics in the place of debate on substantive issues.

There was a profound lack of understanding illustrated in the member's comments about the real Saskatchewan situation, and as old research officer I think I might like to acquaint you with some of the basics regarding our condition in this province.

We do have in Saskatchewan a varied population, one that we're proud of and one that we enjoy the diversity of, but it does create some particular challenges for us as a province. We have the most seniors of any province in Canada in proportion

to our population and the most children. So we have the most people that are at some of the highest levels of need in terms of expenditure that comes from the social envelope. Although we have 3 per cent of the population in Canada, we have 14 per cent of the aboriginal population in Canada which again is both a cultural benefit, a social benefit, but creates some special challenges for our us.

In rural Saskatchewan 60 per cent of the agricultural land in western Canada is in Saskatchewan, so federal decisions like the change in the Western Grain Transportation Act affects Saskatchewan more than it does other provinces. What I'd ask the opposition is why you aren't standing up for Saskatchewan, and why you aren't defending the values that make Saskatchewan and Canada what it is.

When we went out in our new century consultations, the public told us they wanted less taxation, less government, better services, a balanced budget. These are all laudable goals. But in order to achieve them in such a way that you don't create damage to your basic social and economic fabric, they have to be carefully thought through in the context of the real people who live in Saskatchewan: the seniors, the aboriginals, rural, and all of the rest of us who make up the population of this province.

These are many masters to serve, and I think our government has worked hard to balance these various needs in Saskatchewan. In our first phase of government, we dealt with a financial plan to get rid of the debt and start living without deficit budgets. We worked on health reform because the exponential growth of costs in the health area weren't sustainable. We developed REDAs so that rural communities could use their resources to pull together and create strong economic and job base in rural Saskatchewan.

Now in our second term of government, we'll be moving on to new areas of challenge while continuing the work started in the other areas, in social services and education.

We have a lot of challenges facing us. There's fewer trading centres. There's international trading rules that are changing, and federal and provincial governments have less resources to work with. This results in an uneven system that can create considerable inequity and upheaval unless it's very carefully thought through. The challenge for both the federal and provincial governments is to work in partnership on these challenges. But there's no doubt that the contemplated changes to the health, social transfer are going to affect Saskatchewan in some very significant ways.

I attended several of the *Preparing for the New Century* consultations and there was . . . two of the strongest messages that came across from people, is to fight Ottawa harder on the choices they've made regarding their budget and the Canadian health, social transfer choices. And also to fight harder for fair taxation.

I know that some of the members of the opposition attended these consultations and I would hope that they heard these messages as well as we did.

I'm going to explain today why I think people feel this way about the federal choices. Our government acknowledges that the federal government has a problem with debt and deficit. What we don't acknowledge is the choices that they've made; 73 per cent of their cuts — and I'll repeat it again, 73 per cent of their cuts — are from the social development envelope of health, education, and social services.

They didn't choose to re-examine the unfair tax system. They didn't choose to look at other areas of government spending. They went to the big pots of money where the getting is easy and they chose to take 73 per cent of these cuts from the social development envelope.

They have a GST (goods and services tax) that still costs 50 per cent of the revenue it generates to administer. They have allowed a taxation system to stay in place that was greatly aggravated when it went to three income tax bands, which created more serious inequity in an already unfair tax system, as well as the many loopholes that exist for those who can easily afford to pay on the basis of their real income and profits.

So in order to truly evaluate the federal decisions we have to measure them against our Saskatchewan and Canadian values. So I'm going to try again to articulate these values. I often think about what they are and what they mean to us and how we can protect them.

Our values are to build a Canada that includes everyone and that cares for all of its citizens. And that's about as simple as I can say it, Mr. Speaker. I've tried many times to capture that one and that's about as good as I can get on it. But we want to create a system of universal access to the services that meet the basic needs of Canadians for health, education, and security.

Due to their unwillingness to look seriously at all their areas of budgetary expenditure, the federal government has created, I think, a lot of unnecessary insecurity and great potential damage to our safety net across Canada.

I think that the choices that they have made are causing men and women across Canada to organize to voice their opposition to these changes. The CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer) changes are further aggravated by changes to UIC, training, the western grain transportation — as I've mentioned before — and the federal policy on inherent right which shifts much of their financial responsibility to the province.

And I certainly am hearing on coffee row a lot of concerns about the pension changes that were announced. People in Saskatchewan and Canada who fought for a compassionate Canada will not sit idly by and watch the undermining of Canadian values, and I think our challenge both federally and provincially is to be partners in governance.

Where is this country headed? We know where Saskatchewan is headed. We have long committed our self to cooperation, caring, to compassion, and to a partnership approach to the changes.

A couple of weeks ago, February 24, on *Double Exposure*, they

had a little skit that was apparently built on a speech by Lucien Bouchard — and I'm sure they took a lot of creative leeway in this — and this speech reminded me of why we live in Canada, why we care about Canada, and what we want to defend. So with the tolerance of the House, I'm just going to go through a little bit about this speech, called "Canada is Not a Real Country."

(1530)

> I must in all honesty tell that I couldn't live in Canada because it's not a real country. They don't play real football in Canada. They have three downs and extra points and very high scores. They should have four downs and lots of time-outs and low scores. That's what a real country would have.
>
> They don't play real hockey in Canada. You have to look so hard just to see the tiny black puck. They should have a puck with a blue glow and a red streak following it. That's what a real country would have.
>
> They don't have real television in Canada. They have *Anne of Green Gables* and *North of 60* and *Man Alive*. They should have *Geraldo* and Rush Limbaugh, and *Bay Watch*. That's what a real country would have.
>
> They don't have real radio in Canada. They have *Morningside* and *As It Happens*, and even *Double Exposure*. They should have Howard Stern and Gordon Liddy and heavy metal. That's what a real country would have.
>
> They don't even have real radio in . . . they don't have real uses for nuclear power in Canada — they use it for lighting people's houses. They should be out there testing it in the Pacific Ocean to see how big an explosion it can make. That's what a real country would do.
>
> They don't have real guns in Canada. A few people have some rifles, maybe a few shotguns. Every citizen should be allowed to stock up with 45's, 357's, and 22's. That's what a real country would do.
>
> They don't have real soldiers in Canada. They spend their whole time acting like friendly policemen. They never fire at anybody. They should order them to attack small countries all the time, get rid of dictators and foreign leaders. That's what a real country would do.
>
> It's crazy to provide equal health care for every citizen in the country. People should be made to pay for their health care. That's what a real country would do.
>
> How silly can you get to ask a leader of a country to stand up every day and answer questions about what he's been doing. Instead they should be left alone to hold meetings and to make all their decisions without being questioned. That's what a real country would do.
>
> And listen to this: no matter how bad the crime, Canadians don't kill people. Instead all criminals should be hanged or shot or put to sleep. That's what a real country would do.
>
> So you see, my friends, I want to live in a real country — not a country where the winters are always cold, not a country where the airports are filled with thousands of people who want to move here, not a country where they force you to pay people at least minimum wage, not a country where natives are going to get their land back, not a country where English and French are accepted everywhere, and not a country where people of all ethnic backgrounds are respected, not a country where the poor places are helped out by the rich places. These things don't happen in a real country; they only happen in Canada, and I find that very sad.

So I'd like to thank *Double Exposure* for that little bit because it made me very proud of Canada when I reflected on it in that context.

And I'd just like to urge all members of the House to support the Saskatchewan and Canada that we care about and to join us and the Minister of Finance in supporting our Saskatchewan and Canadian values. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Murray: — With leave, to introduce a guest, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member from Kelvington-Wadena for this courtesy.

Seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, is a constituent and good friend of mine, Roger Linka from Lumsden. Roger is a long-time worker and supporter of this government and also a distinguished lawyer. I will ask all members to join me in welcoming him here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Cuts to Federal Transfer Payments

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I want to support the amendment offered by the member from Thunder Creek. As a business person, I know what it's like to be efficient in this changing world. We often are asked to make cuts, both large and small, and still project growth in our companies.

The federal government cuts to transfer payments was less than 2 per cent of the whole Saskatchewan budget. This government knew there was going to be cuts, and there were no surprises in them. And yet they made no attempt to get their own spending under control. They introduced Crown tendering, which would

have more than made up for any of the cut-backs from the federal government. The union tendering policy was passed on to appease a small group of people that are probably out of touch with the real world.

This government wasn't very worried about cut-backs when they increased their own cabinet by four ministers. In fact we now have two ministers where we used to have one, and I take kind of an insult in that because I always thought wherever there was a woman working, we didn't need a man.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Spending money on Crown Life is something else that I really object to because if I talk to the seniors in my area where they have problems with having no hospital any more, and I asked them if they preferred to own shares in a company or if they wanted a hospital, and I don't think I have to tell you what their answer was.

We spent a lot of money on public consultations that, although I agree the public has to be consulted about spending every one of their tax dollars, we have to wonder about them if we already know the answers before the question is asked.

The Premier's address again cost us a lot of money and I don't know that the people of this province benefited from it, but again it was a waste of taxpayers' dollars. I wonder if the minister remembers her very astute move when they sold the Cameco shares and it saved our province over $50 million in interest payments, and we thank her for that.

I wonder if selling off some more of the Crown corporations with money going to pay down the debt directly wouldn't save this province lots of dollars, millions of dollars, in interest payments.

I'm asking this government, through the minister, to stop whining about cuts and to start . . . and change her mind about her welfare mentality. I'm also asking her to have enough faith in the people of this province to allow them to get this economy on its feet. We won't need our huge Social Services budget if the atmosphere in this province allowed businesses to grow and hire people. My comment to this government is stop complaining and go to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter into the debate this afternoon and to speak against and reject the amendment that's been presented by the members opposite, and support the original motion and the intent of the motion as presented by our Hon. Minister of Finance. And perhaps the members opposite are really hearing the whine of their colleagues across the Chamber as apologists, whining apologists, for the federal Liberal government, rather than any noises that might be coming on behalf of Saskatchewan people to support health care, education, and social services in the province of Saskatchewan.

It's interesting to me that as the Leader of the Third Party, the member of Greystone, in the last Assembly was speaking against some of the measures that were happening because they were unjust from the Liberal government in Ottawa. We now have not members of a Liberal Party of Saskatchewan but whining apologists for the federal Liberals in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, anywhere I go in Saskatchewan I pick up and hear the concern of people in Saskatchewan that the federal government is not listening to them, and it refuses to understand where they feel the priority should be placed. And they refuse to hear and understand that people in Saskatchewan feel their priorities are wrong.

Mr. Speaker, most recently the Shaunavon *Standard* talked about "vital services are cut while pig trough brimming with tax dollars." And I quote:

> When it comes time for spending cuts, the federal government immediately goes for the jugular.
>
> Health, education, and social services are always first on (their) chopping block.
>
> We have been brainwashed into believing these three areas of spending are chiefly responsible for our government's debt — expected to be $6.16 billion by the end of 1996-97.
>
> Yet, while these services, which are vital to maintaining Canada's standard of living, are repeatedly sacrificed, truly wasteful uses of tax money and blatant patronage pig troughs continued to get a steady stream of government dollars.

They go on to list a number of those from The National Citizens' Coalition, some of them which include some ludicrous spending such as $500,000 for a canoe hall of fame in the Prime Minister's own riding.

They go on to talk about the many areas that their spending . . . that add additional costs to the spending in Canada for the MPs' (Member of Parliament) offices and for Senators in the country, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know. I haven't heard many people in Saskatchewan understand or know about tax points, but I do know that the *Star-Phoenix* caught the point that the member opposite was trying to make. And I would quote, in response to what he's saying, from the *Star-Phoenix* which was dated February 2:

> It's one thing for the federal government, which is feeling the heat from (the) irate taxpayers to get its spending under control, to cut back on grants to the provinces. In this case, it has decided to cut spending on health, education and welfare — (that's) a political decision.
>
> It's another for Ottawa to conjure up numbers to make it appear as if the cut is not a cut. After all, those "tax-point dollars" have been a part of provincial income for almost two decades and have been spent on things like health, education and welfare. It's not "new money" that makes up for a whopping cut to the CHST.

> No matter how the feds explain it, Saskatchewan will get less money in total from Ottawa in 1996-97, with the province still expected to make up the shortfall in providing (these) services.

Again, it's passing strange to me why the members opposite want to stand up and be apologists for the federal priorities which people in Saskatchewan are saying are wrong priorities indeed.

People of Saskatchewan say they've been judged by the United Nations as living in the best country in the world, and by the standards applied in Canada, the best province in the world. And they don't take the criteria that were used lightly — the criteria that include universal health care, access to education, and how we take care of those most vulnerable in our communities. These areas keep us strong as a nation and they keep us strong in our determination to provide a good quality of life to all people, not only for this generation but for subsequent generations to come.

In doing that, Mr. Speaker, we haven't looked to the Liberal solutions from Ottawa that tell us, oh well, we'll just sell off Saskatchewan assets and we'll put those into general spending and we'll somehow back-fill for the misplaced priorities in cutting that is coming to us from Ottawa.

The federal government, the Ottawa Liberals — I'm saying the kissing cousins to the members opposite — are looking more Tory every day. They've given us three years of deep cuts.

The hon. member from Regina Lake Centre has also pointed out the article in the Thunder Creek paper that asks, why are Liberals in Saskatchewan wanting to defend the slashing and burning of social programs by the federal Liberals?

Is it denial? I wonder. Or is it desire to push more and more for the American system and the American style of real country that we've heard from the member previously.

In wondering whether it's a desire to push for an American system, I talked with a person who was worried and said, you know, if they're talking about American system of health care, I'd like to tell you about my father and mother and their experience. For in 1976 they lived in Florida, and after a brief illness and three days in hospital his father passed away.

Now this couple in Florida carried the best medical coverage they could in 1976 and it was a brief, three-day stay in hospital for a dying individual. At the end his mother received the bill for her portion of the costs that were incurred on their behalf. After having the best medical coverage available at that time — $1,800 — that's in 1976. What will a Liberal's 2000 look like in this country if they're going to continue their process of denial or their desire to turn our health care in to an American-style health care system?

Mr. Speaker, our province and our government was bracing itself for two years of savage cuts to health, education, and social programs. Ottawa Liberals have given us three years of deep cuts. And as is outlined in *The Globe and Mail*, if anyone's trying to get back into their mode of denial across the House, to us it looks like, in *The Globe and Mail*, the cash transfers to the provinces, and circling the ones to Saskatchewan, in the year 1996, $624 million. When we hit that floor — maybe the walls of the House won't be standing — but when we hit the floor that's left, we're looking at transfers in the year 2001 of $371 million. My math, Mr. Speaker, says it's $253 million less to the province of Saskatchewan. Now you remember though that this is also on top of cuts that have already been incurred over the last several years, and I'll outline some of those later in my speech, Mr. Speaker.

(1545)

The face of social programs in Canada will be changed for ever with the change in funding from Ottawa. Less than 8 per cent of federal revenue will go towards social programs, and organizations like the United Nations have concluded that social spending in the range of 20 to 25 per cent is reasonable. The very programs that have made Canada number one in the world are programs that the Liberals in Ottawa have decided are not important.

So what did the federal government promise, Mr. Speaker? We heard the federal government promise tax reform — fair taxation. They were going to plug some of those loopholes. There was going to be an end to the GST. The member opposite says, little room to manoeuvre for the federal government, Mr. Speaker. I question that statement.

What we got was not tax fairness, which would be room to manoeuvre. What we have got — $300 million worth of tax breaks to the banks to improve their automated teller systems. What we have got — some of the wealthiest corporations who receive tax bills have enough loopholes to not have to pay those tax bills, Mr. Speaker.

No mention in the federal budget of reform, no mention of the GST . . . and their own member, Mr. Nunziata, standing up and saying he's going to vote against his own government because his principle is on the line. He campaigned on tax reform. He said he went door to door.

He is going to leave the Deputy Prime Minister to make up her own mind on what she'll do on this issue for, as a Liberal candidate in 1993, the member, Sheila Copps, the Liberal candidate at that time said: I've already said personally and very directly that if the GST is not abolished, I'll resign. I don't know how clear you can get. I think you've got to be accountable on things that you have to say and that you're going to do, and you have to deliver on it. She was just echoing what the Prime Minister said as a candidate in 1993, when he said we will scrap the GST . . . No tax reform, no room to manoeuvre for the federal government.

Well the issue of corporation tax is a different story. Taxes for individuals have been sky-rocketing in the last 20 years. Corporate taxes have been dropping. Currently corporations in Canada, including Paul Martin's own steamship line, don't even pay as much tax as their counterparts in the United States.

And what's the result of this policy of hosing the individual and giving big corporations a free ride? Well look around. Look opposite, to the statements made by the members opposite. We have a government with an astronomical debt and a deficit, record profits for the banks and other big businesses coupled with record unemployment and child poverty for the rest of us. Meanwhile the government keeps telling us our social programs are too rich. They can't afford health care, post-secondary education, training, social assistance, and pension plans. And the members opposite continue the litany for their federal cousins.

Mr. Martin in his budget did not stand up and tell us anything about their number 1 priority: jobs and job creation. They gave hope to young people in Saskatchewan. They gave hope to young people across Canada. And what do we see that hasn't been announced with pride in the last budget? Cuts in unemployment insurance training dollars that will add up to about $31 million over the next three years, cuts in education that will surely mean increases in tuition and increases in student loans and financial clocks that are ticking with interest payments for students who now face loans in the order of 20 to $30,000 by the time they graduate.

There was no mention of economic development and jobs. So we wonder, where is the federal companion piece to the *Partnership for Growth*? We might even ask, where is the Saskatchewan Liberals' plan for economic growth in this province?

So the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the federal Liberals in their 1996-97 budget, in their figures that we look at that will be going well into the next century, fly in the face of Canadian people and Canadian priorities. We know that our New Democrat government in Saskatchewan is working hard through our reforms in health care; in social services; in education; in governance, to protect people. What we've seen from the federal government in Ottawa is protection of privilege.

We don't stand up and say we're opposing everything that Ottawa is doing. We don't oppose them battling deficits. We've done that. But it's not been at the expense or on the backs of those greatest in need in our communities.

We don't oppose having reform in health care but not without basic standards in place, without accessibility to basic health care services. We welcome reform. We want that reform in our country to keep the principle of medicare strong.

We're not opposed to redesign of social assistance, but not a system that has been outlined where it says the only thing in place to protect people on social assistance is to say that no province is going to deny them social assistance. What that does do is pit people against people and province against province. What it does do is bash at the victims, and it condones a system that says our form of welfare or our form of social assistance and our form of looking after those most vulnerable in our provinces is a one-way bus ticket to somewhere else.

Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that social democrats stand in a firm message that we want to send to the federal Liberals in Ottawa. We call on those Ottawa Liberals to consider a national plan that puts an end to these cuts and protects national standards and basic services. It would only be a surprise — and I think a surprise to all people in Saskatchewan — if the Liberals and Tories don't join us in our call to respond to our people and to have those priorities changed.

How they've chosen to tackle their debt — 73 per cent of the cuts in cash transfers to health, education and social programs. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we shout, no. And we would ask all members in the Assembly to reject the amendment that's in place before us and to support the motion moved by the Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of enthusiasm that I rise here today, Mr. Speaker, to give support to the motion put by the Minister of Finance. the motion which speaks directly to an issue that, I believe, affects every one of us and will affect the future of the country if it is not addressed and not debated at length. And that is the issue which speaks to the amounts and the principle of the governments at all levels to contribute to the social fabric of this country.

The motion that was put by the Hon. Minister of Finance was:

> That this Legislative Assembly shares the government's concern that 73 per cent of the cuts in the 1996-97 federal budget are cuts in cash transfer (payments) to provinces for health, education, and social programs; furthermore, reductions in federal funding for health, education, and social programs continue into the next century; therefore we call on the federal government to consider (the) . . . national plan that ends these cuts and protects national standards and basic services.

Mr. Speaker, the trend that is being set by the federal government now is to opt out of funding for post-secondary education, to put a greater and greater burden on the province and local governments to fund all of education and health. This really does undermine the fabric of Canada as we know it.

It was only three or four months ago that we learned that the United Nations named Canada as the best place in which to live and Saskatchewan was subsequently named as the province the best in which . . . of the best of the group of 10 in Canada on the same criteria. What was this criteria, Mr. Speaker? The criteria was based on three things. It was based on the education levels of the population. It was based on the longevity of the people in the country or in the province, and it was based on the cost of living or the purchasing power of the people in the province. Now these cuts undermine two of those very basic, basic social programs. That is the one of health services and education that's being provided to the country.

The reason that Canada came out the best and that Saskatchewan came out the best is because it's been a practice

over many years to develop these programs and to continually evaluate them and to make them better by looking for improvements. And what has happened is we found to this date that they have evolved to the stage where they are being well accepted and adopted at all levels by all levels of government. And people expect all levels of government to support them.

That's why I was rather dismayed, Mr. Speaker, when the federal Minister of Finance announced in his budget that in all of his cut-backs, his attempts to work towards a balanced budget at the federal level — and he should be working towards a balanced budget — that 73 per cent of the cuts should go to those programs which are valued most in this country. And I was very dismayed by that, Mr. Speaker.

It gave me a different feeling than I had originally about the federal Liberals. I thought that when the federal Liberals took over that they would have recognized what the people of Canada were saying to the Tories before them and what the people of Saskatchewan said to the Tories before they kicked them unceremoniously out of office here.

And the Liberals opposite who are supporting this motion here today ought to take note of that because what the people of Canada said in both of those elections was that they were tired of the shift in power towards those that have and towards those who take without taking the corresponding responsibility for funding those programs which are most valued by the people of Canada and by the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we should never allow our children or our grandchildren to forget how the spending spree was developed by the Conservatives opposite and how it was developed in Ottawa by the Conservatives who set up the debt which is now forcing these cuts. And we should also remind the people of Canada and the people of Saskatchewan that the Liberals at the federal level seem to be following exactly the same course and are being supported right now at this very time by the Liberals right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, several years ago I had the pleasure of hosting a visitor from West Africa to my home town of Prince Albert. And he was interested in seeing our schools and our hospitals and our prisons. And as we visited one or two places, he asked me about how we were funding these places because he thought they were . . . he was quite impressed with how they were furnished, with the equipment we had in them, with the buildings themselves, and was very interested in the funding process.

So I explained to him that we had a system of taxation where people at the local level, through their property taxes, supported both the schools, the road systems, and the hospitals to some extent at that time and how we collected taxes at the provincial level, through the income tax largely and the sales tax. And we at the provincial level set up a system to provide an equal opportunity for every child that went to school so that children at Prince Albert, no matter what part of the city they were in, had the same amount of money spent on them by the school system as did say the children in Saskatoon or Regina or any other part of the province.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, you can go right across the continent. And because of the system of sharing that we have, you'll find that the children in Saskatchewan just have equal educational opportunities in terms of amount of money spent on them as do say the children of Nova Scotia or any other part of the country.

(1600)

Now after explaining this to my guest he just stopped me and he took me by the arm and he says, you just don't understand . . . I'm putting this wrong. He says, do you understand what a wonderful thing you have done in this country, that you have developed ways of sharing, sharing your bounty amongst everybody in the country for these very important things such as health and education? And we were concentrating on education. And his statement impressed me to such an extent that I keep repeating it because it's something that identifies us as a country. And I as a New Democrat identify with those because of the principles and policies we have fought for through the years.

And when I see a shift away from that, when I see a shift away from the federal government involving itself in funding of post-secondary education and health, I see that whole system of ours going into a bit of an imbalance. And I think it is time to raise the alarm bells on it.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, in the past few years is that through the passing of the trade agreements, the Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and with the deregulation that has followed, there has been an increasing burden of taxation on individual human being taxpayers and a decreasing responsibility for the tax load being paid now from the corporations. There's been a rather dramatic shift. It used to be that the corporations in general paid about 20 per cent of the tax load. Now I believe it to be around 8 per cent of the total tax load in our nation, so there's been a dramatic shift there.

And yet at the same time, when that shift has occurred, there has not been a corresponding shift in bearing the response . . . in the ability . . . Let me say this again, Mr. Speaker, so I can get my train of thought across. What has happened is there has been a shift in who pays the taxes, but there's . . . in the favour of the individual taxpayer. But while that has happened, more and more of the laws and the tax laws and the power to make those laws has shifted in the direction of the corporations. So the corporations, while they're enjoying greater power in their ability to make profit and to travel internationally with the profits and their money, are not bearing the same amount of responsibility for the social programs. And at the same time the general public is demanding that the programs remain.

About three years ago, perhaps four, when President Clinton in the States was first elected, he set out on a very, very ambitious program. One of his programs was to reform education in a direction of equity as he saw happening in Canada. Another of his programs was in the direction of Medicare. He wanted to set up a system where we had a user-pay. He wanted to set up a system, Mr. Speaker, where his federal level of government would mirror what was being done in Canada for our social

programs, where we had a sharing arrangement between all levels.

Well we saw what happened to Mr. Clinton in that, Mr. Speaker. We saw the power of advertising by the insurance companies, and we saw that Mr. Clinton failed in his objective. He failed in his objective to get equity in education, and as a result in the States you still get, even within one system, you might get one student having about $2,000 per year spent on per capita basis, compared to some place else where there may be $6,000 spent on a per capita basis.

I was rather disappointed when that happened, Mr. Speaker; that is, I was disappointed to see Mr. Clinton fail in that. I wanted him to succeed because I thought if he succeeded, then they would be in a position where they would be adopting some of the programs that we so valued here in Canada. But what we saw happening there is corporate power and individual . . . the individual power of corporations was so great that they won the day there, and now we're seeing the same influence on our federal government.

And I was very disappointed that the federal Liberals did not see that happening and did not work out a strategy where they would ask the corporations who make a great profit and who should make a profit. It's only right that they make a profit but that they also share in the responsibilities of paying for the social programs in Canada. If the federal government can no longer do it through taxing individuals, then they ought to be approaching the corporations who make their money here. And God bless them; they should make some money, but that they should also share in that responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, this entire motion I believe deserves support. And while I will be voting for the motion, I wanted to flag at the same time that it was symptomatic of a trend which we have to address and that is a trend about growing imbalances between those that have means and those without means — a growing imbalance between Canada's and Canadians' desire to have well-developed social programs and Canadians' ability to pay for them.

We need to really rethink our entire social structure so that we can work out that balance between individual rights and individual responsibilities. Corporations in Canada enjoy the same rights as do individuals. A corporation can buy things, can sell things. An individual can do that, but corporations have been taking less and less of a responsibility in terms of funding our social programs.

I suppose the balance between rights and responsibilities of corporations at that level could be rethought in a manner similar to the balance that we are rethinking right now about the rights of an individual to drive and drink, and the responsibility of a driver who has taken a drink. Society has decreased its tolerance for people or towards people who insist on putting others in jeopardy through drinking and are saying, hey, if you're going to do that we will take away your right to drive . . . and are asking governments to put those kind of laws into place. And they're asking us to look at the balance between the right to drive and the responsibility of a driver.

In a very similar way, I think that people in Saskatchewan and Canada are asking us to rethink the rights that we give corporations and how much we're expecting of them so that we do not get ourselves into a situation where federal governments will be ending up cutting payments, as this federal government is doing, to the provinces to support these programs.

Mr. Speaker, I will close by making one or two remarks about the member's statement from . . . the member from Thunder Creek. In his rambling remarks he did make one thing that kind of stuck out that I wanted to comment on. He talked very briefly about Saskatchewan increasing its revenue in order to balance the budget, which is true. We did increase the taxation in order to balance the budget. We cut some programs, Mr. Speaker, and we did increase some taxes, but the whole objective was to balance the budget. But we did it in a way where we did not put our programs into jeopardy.

What I couldn't understand was what the member was saying when he said that we put the taxes up. Was he saying that if we didn't put the taxes up, that we should not have balanced the budget? Or was he saying that we should have cut into health, education, and social services more? I suspect it was the latter because that's a position he's taking now in supporting the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the amendment. I will be supporting the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It should come as no surprise to my colleagues or indeed to the members opposite that I intend to support the main motion, and I will be voting against the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, this debate very clearly is a watershed debate. It's a debate about choices, and it clearly shows us the difference between the kinds of choices that social democrats make and the choices that a tattered Liberal Party makes. This choice that we have to make today is whether or not we stand silent in the face of the federal government plundering our very valuable social programs and cutting funding by 73 per cent. It is about choosing who you will listen to and what is your priority.

Clearly the members opposite have demonstrated that they will listen to the tiny, tiny capsule, timed-release, bitter pill of Paul Martin and pretend that all is still wonderful in this land and that there will be no major changes to our social programs. Clearly they have chosen to listen to Paul Martin who prefers to plunder our social programs rather than ratcheting back his other program spending which he clearly should do if he's going to be fiscally responsible.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House have chosen by philosophy, by ideology, by inclination to listen to the people of this country. We know that what the people of this country — not solely in Saskatchewan but all across this country — we know that what they are saying is that our health, education and social programs are what makes us Canadian, what makes us proud to be Canadian, and what

makes this a country that anyone would be proud to live in.

Mr. Speaker, for the last year this country has been plunged into a very, very grave debate, a debate that threatens the very existence of this country as we know it. It is very sad, Mr. Speaker, that in the desire for certain people to have more of a say in their destiny that they have felt that they had to go to the point of actually talking about and wanting separation because really the debate, if you step back and examine what is happening and what happened with the referendum in October, the debate is really not about how to carve up this precious little pie and how to get rid of one part of the country or another part of the country. The debate really is how can all Canadians — regardless of their original language, regardless of the country from which they originally came — how can all Canadians continue to be proud and continue to live in this country, strong and free.

The debate should not be about how to separate in this country; the debate should be about how to keep the country together. We all, I believe, know and affirm in our hearts that Canada is the very best place in the world to live.

(1615)

Now because we're modest by nature, because we apologize if somebody bumps into us, we tend not to say, hey, neighbours to the south, we are the best country in the world to live, and you should learn from our example. Instead we kind of hide our light under a bushel barrel and hope that eventually somehow everybody in the world will recognize how wonderful Canada is. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada is a wonderful place. And just as proof of that, I would say that in the '60s it was curious that the people who wished not to serve in an immoral war in Vietnam came north. They didn't go south. They came to Canada because they knew it's a great country.

But that sort of begs the question: what is so great about Canada?

Because despite the fact that we are seeing our first spring thaw, we can't necessarily say that it is the weather that is wonderful about Canada. There was an RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officer in the late 1800s who made a witticism that I think we should all probably remember when we're talking about Canada and its weather from coast to coast to coast. He said that in Canada we have five seasons: we've got the horsefly season; we've got the blackfly season; we've got the deer fly season; we've got the mosquito season; and we've got winter. Clearly, the weather is not something that makes Canada a wonderful country in which to live.

Nor indeed is it the great vast distances that we have to cope with. Mr. Speaker, I live in Saskatoon. I work in Regina. My mother, who is ill, lives in Moose Jaw. If I want to go and visit my mother, even for a half-hour visit, that is going to take me a minimum of seven hours to go to visit my mother because I have to drive from Saskatoon to Moose Jaw. I have to drive very slowly through the great city of Moose Jaw because the police there are absolutely wonderful in terms of making sure that nobody exceeds the speeding limit. I then go to the nursing home where she resides. I have a half-hour or an hour visit with her, depending on the state of her health, and then I get in the car and I drive back to Saskatoon. Seven hours to visit my mother — that's not a simple thing to do, to follow through on your filial responsibilities, but we do it all over this country. We keep in touch with our families despite the great distances.

Mr. Speaker, as I look and think about what's great about Canada, it becomes apparent to me that besides the great people that live in this country, what is truly great and wondrous about this country is the social programs that we have. They are the things that caused the United Nations to recognize this country as the best in the world in which to live. They are the things that distinguish us, that set us apart, from people in other parts of the world.

Other countries have tried to develop similar programs but no other country, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, has been so successful in having such a complete package that is sensitive and is capable of evolving to meet the needs of the citizenry of the day. The most obvious example of a country that has tried to do this, but certainly hasn't got it right, is the United States of America. They spend more as a percentage of their GDP (gross domestic product) on health care than Canada does. And yet quite clearly, as other members have talked about, they haven't got it right.

Quite clearly, there are droves of homeless people in the United States. There are many people who are terrorized by the thought that they might develop some major illness, and either because they (a) lack basic medical insurance; or (b) there are some nice fine points, some loopholes, in their insurance; or (c) they've lost their job and so therefore they don't have that health care insurance. These people can go bankrupt, and they can bankrupt their children and their grandchildren trying to pay for their medical bills.

Last Christmas I decided to order a book as a gift for a friend of mine. And I looked around and the only place I could find a copy of that book was in the state of New Jersey. So I phoned down to the book seller to order the book. Since it was out of print, I had to go to an antique book seller. As we were talking, he said, well what's it like in Canada now? And I said, well it's cold. I mean, what do you expect, this is Canada after all. And he said, but you know, you shouldn't complain. And I said, why not? He said, you all have medicare, and that's really great. I said, oh yeah, well what's so wonderful? I mean give me some examples; what's happening for you?

He said that he had been in an accident — he had whiplash — and he was going to a chiropractor. He had insurance. He was getting proper treatment. It was an accident that was not his fault. But he was still having to pay $200 per visit to his chiropractor over and above what was covered by his insurance.

I also recently talked to some friends who decided to go down to the States for a holiday this January. While they were in the States, their daughter became ill and they weren't certain whether or not they should take her to a doctor or not, but out of a sense of abundant caution, they phoned the hospital to describe the symptoms.

The hospital's response, Mr. Speaker? They said bring her in but bring your Visa card with you. Now that isn't the kind of medical coverage that we want in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government is belatedly learning fiscal prudence. I pride myself in some small measure that perhaps they're looking at the kinds of things that we've done in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan, after all, did lead the way in 1991-92 with a great commitment to fiscal prudence, to thrift, and to getting our financial affairs in order.

We led the way. We were the first province in all of Canada to balance our budget in over 10 years. And now the federal government — belatedly, as I say — has seen the light. They too are also trying to balance their books. I cannot fault them for that, Mr. Speaker. Indeed I applaud them. But I do have to question the priorities and the way they are going about doing it.

In Saskatchewan we developed a plan. It was, we feel, a thoughtful approach. It was an approach that insisted that all people in all corners of this province had to share in the financial responsibility of getting our house back in order again. It was a plan though, Mr. Speaker, that protected the poorest and most vulnerable in this province. It was a compassionate plan and it worked.

On the other hand, what we have with the federal government is a government that has reneged responsibility. They've looked around and said, how can we do some flimflam Houdini politics and make sure that none of the brown stuff sticks to us.

So what they've done is they've gone after programs that are transfer programs — either transfer in terms of dollars or tax points — so that they can then say: hey, it wasn't us, we didn't do it. We are not responsible, say the federal government, for the fact that a young man can no longer go to a training program in a mechanics apprentice program at Kelsey Institute or something like that — it's not us. They're finding somebody else to blame.

Or the other thing that they are doing, which I consider even more reprehensible, is they've simply handed it over — the decision making — over to their senior public servants, senior civil servants, who sit comfortably in their plush offices in Ottawa and make decisions about budget cuts that keep them as far away from those senior civil servants as possible. That is not responsible financial planning in my opinion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize — and I think the members opposite know this — Saskatchewan has never challenged federal standards. We have never said, let's follow the Alberta model, let's de-skill, let's shed things, let's make things worse. We have never said that. Saskatchewan, and people on all sides of the House, I would suggest, are proud to be Canadians, are proud of the fact that Saskatchewan has stood up for the federation that we have in this country.

We need to maintain national standards. We need to strengthen them, Mr. Speaker. For instance in the area of health care, what is wrong with us getting together, with having our ministers of Health get together, and take a look at the patchwork that has developed across this country and saying, excuse me, we do not agree with conflict of interest and we will not allow joint business ventures where we have vertical integration of health care services. We will stop the situation where a general physician can have an ownership position in an X-ray clinic, in a lab clinic, and in a physiotherapy clinic. We will stop that so that people will be seen as individuals, as patients, by the physician but that he or she does not have a financial incentive to refer them on for additional services. That's one national standard I'd like to see strengthened.

In terms of education, it seems to me we have to get serious about the fact that many people want to go to one university or another, one secondary education institution or another; and that there are no real portability of credits between those institutions, whether we're talking about an institution like SIAST or its equivalent in Calgary, or whether we're talking about a university. We don't have those kinds of standards for our young people. It is time we got serious about it and started to develop these things so that we can have better training for youth.

It is also time that nationally we developed and implemented really strong industrial training protocols.

With respect to social services, Mr. Speaker . . . I may get into trouble here, but I'm going to say this one anyway. The person who spoke . . . the member who spoke just before me talked about the need to balance rights and responsibilities. That is a theme that I have been talking about for some time, and I want to emphasize it now with respect to the whole argument that was swirling around this country a month or two ago with respect to the decision that the province of British Columbia made about social assistance. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that they brought in a regulation insisting that people had to be in B.C. for 90 days before they qualified for social assistance.

An Hon. Member: — Do you support that, Pat?

Ms. Lorje: — The Leader of the Third Party asks me if I support that. I will tell him very directly, yes I do support that, I do support that. I think that people do have the right to be mobile in this country. It is important that people have the right to move from province to province.

At the same time, there is a certain amount of responsibility as well, on those people and on those provinces, and what I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is that right now the only national standard that we have left with respect to social assistance is the fact that no province can deny anybody social assistance on the basis of where they live — the mobility right.

But we also have to look at the mobility responsibility and it needs to occur at a provincial level. I would suggest that if the son or daughter of the Leader of the Third Party chose to leave Saskatchewan tomorrow and chose to move to Victoria, B.C., that it should be either that gentleman opposite exercising his parental responsibility or it should be the provincial government here exercising their responsibility and for the 90 days that that child was in B.C. that their welfare costs would

be picked up by the home province, not by the province to where the person is moving.

It's only by having that sense of balancing rights and responsibilities nationally, all across the piece, that we're going to be able to get into some realistic discussion about what is happening with social assistance. We cannot have the situation continuing where we have one province giving people one-way bus tickets to leave their province, another province opting out of an already tenuous system. We need to look, and to recognize that all of us as Canadians have some responsibility for people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves jobless and find themselves without an income.

(1630)

Mr. Speaker, I want to give at least a couple of other members an opportunity to say some things today, so I'm going to wrap up. I do want to say that this country is not held together solely by federal financial blackmail. But this country is held together by that federal sense that together, collectively, with national standards, we, all of us, are bigger than the size of our own shadow.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from a poem that to me indicates just how far the Liberals opposite have not travelled. Mr. Speaker, it sums up their philosophy, I think, and it sums up what is happening federally in this country now. It is a poem that was written by a man named F.R. Scott. He wrote it in the late 1940s, shortly after William Lyon Mackenzie King died.

Mr. Speaker, F.R. Scott was at one point in his life the dean of McGill law school. He was also one of the authors of the *Regina Manifesto*. And later in his life, he was an adviser to the UN (United Nations). He had a very keen ability to look at people's actions and to see what was really behind them. So he wrote this poem, entitled "W.L.M.K."

How shall we speak of Canada,
MacKenzie King dead?
The Mother's boy in the lonely room
With his dog, his medium, and his ruins?

He blunted us.

We had no shape
Because he never took sides,
And no sides
Because he never allowed them to take shape.

He skilfully avoided what was wrong
Without saying what was right,
And never let his on the one hand
Know what his on the other hand was doing.

The height of his ambition
Was to pile a Parliamentary Committee on a
Royal Commission
To have 'conscription if necessary
But not necessarily conscription',
To let parliament decide —
Later.

Postpone, postpone, abstain.

Only one thread was certain:
After World War 1
Business as usual,
After World War II
Orderly decontrol.
Always he led us back to where we were before.

He seemed to be in the centre
Because (he) had no centre,
No vision
To pierce the smoke-screen of his politics.

Truly he will be remembered
Wherever men honour ingenuity,
Ambiguity, inactivity, and political longevity.

Let us raise up a temple
To the cult of mediocrity,
Do nothing by halves
Which can be done by quarters.

Mr. Speaker, I think that sums up the current position of the federal Liberal government and the provincial Liberal Party in defending these shameful actions: "Always he led us back to where we were before."

Excuse me, we have worked very hard in this country to build up a precious social safety net. Of course it needs modernizing. Of course it needs changes. It needs to become more effective, but it does not need to be plundered in the way that the federal Liberals want to and in the way that the provincial Liberals are leading the parade with.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to say I'm proud, immensely proud to be a Canadian. I have served on a municipal council and I was proud to be a Saskatonian. I am serving now in the provincial legislature. I'm proud to be a Saskatchewanian.

And if I'm to believe the rumours of my federal MP who thinks I might run against him, perhaps some day I may end up in the House of Commons. But whether I do or not, I have to tell you I am proud to be a Canadian, and for me that is the most important piece of my identity. I've travelled all over this world and I will never give up my Canadian citizenship and I will never yield the fight to those people who would roll back the clock of time and have us once again be a dog-eat-dog country.

I will be supporting the motion; I will not support the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be entering this debate on the government motion, which is of course about the federal Liberal budget which is cutting . . . has just cut their budget, trying to reach a balance. The problem is,

Mr. Speaker, they've cut . . . 73 per cent of their budget cuts have been on the backs of sick people, on the backs of poor people, and on the backs of students. Health, social programing, education, those three critical areas that define us more so than anything else as Canadians.

Budgets tend to be a government statement about what their priorities are, Mr. Speaker. Well the federal Liberals have made it very clear what their priorities are. The provincial Liberals today have made it very, very clear that they're arm in arm, lock step with their federal cousins. And I say that's a shame, Mr. Speaker. It's a shame that Liberals . . . I guess it proves the old saying, a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal. But it clearly shows us who it is that politicians listen to. And clearly the Liberals are not listening to people who require health care, educational services, or social programs through our social safety net.

The Liberals continue to blame the sick; they blame the poor; and they blame the students for their ineptitude, for their lack of ability to improve their financial budget situation. This is the legacy. And we see today very clearly the provincial Liberal opposition acting as apologists for their federal counterpart.

It was interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, to hear earlier this day the member for Thunder Creek saying, you know it doesn't matter what numbers the Minister of Finance uses, doesn't matter what numbers the Minister of Finance uses. Well after the Liberal fiasco of yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I don't blame them for running from numbers. I don't blame them one bit for not wanting to talk about numbers. And I certainly don't blame them after yesterday's fiasco. I don't blame them for picking numbers out of the air or being reluctant to pick further numbers out of the air.

The numbers that the opposition have to come to grips with, and I'd like to hear them just once say this number is wrong — 73 per cent of the cuts in the federal budget tabled last week, 73 per cent of the cuts are to sick people, are to students, and are to people who require social assistance, social programs through the social safety net. Challenge that number if you can. I don't believe you can. I certainly haven't heard it.

The member for Shaunavon is poking great fun at this, and it may be a laughing matter to you, sir; it is not a laughing matter to us on this side of the House. We want to look after the people of the province to the best of our ability. We're asking you to set aside this petty, goofy politics where you're defending your Liberal cousins. You think it might be that senator might look good in front of your name? Well good luck. Good luck! There's absolutely no other logical reason why the member for Shaunavon or the member for Thunder Creek would be so adamant, so headstrong in their defence of the federal budget cut — this cut of 73 per cent to Saskatchewan people. No reason for it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I heard the . . . Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I heard the member for Thunder Creek talking a little bit about the job that the provincial government does in taxing banks, and he was decrying that we do somehow a less than stellar job in Saskatchewan. And he held up his federal cousin as a stellar example of how it is that banks should be treated.

Well let me just point out a couple of things to the minister for Thunder Creek. How does Saskatchewan treat banks? Well for your information, Mr. Member, Saskatchewan levies the highest corporate capital tax on banks — the highest in all of Canada. The highest corporate capital tax on the banks in all of Canada levied right here in Saskatchewan by this government.

Saskatchewan has the highest corporate income tax rate on banks in Canada — the highest corporate income tax rate on banks in Canada at 17 per cent. We in addition provide no special exemptions on sales taxes for banks in Saskatchewan, something that other provinces are wont to do.

That's the reality. If you want to talk about taxation and fair taxation, quit wasting your breath on this side of the House, on our Minister of Finance. Talk to your federal Minister of Finance about real, meaningful tax reform that will help the people of Saskatchewan. Do that. Do yourself a favour; do the people of Saskatchewan a favour.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — In contrast the federal government in its last budget, I just want to say, they've extended a temporary surtax on banks. They've extended it a modest period of time, and the tax as a result of this budget is going to go — that the federal government collects from all the banks — is going to go from $60 million in fiscal '95-96 down to $40 million in '96-97.

How in the world can a Liberal defend that record? A 50 per cent cut in a temporary tax on banks? And you hold that up. This is wonderful. This is the Minister of Finance, the federal Liberal Minister of Finance's answer to fair taxation. I think you've got to give your heads a shake.

Join with us. This motion is all about government's choices. The numbers are quite clear — 73 per cent of the cuts of the federal Liberal budget are on the backs of sick, poor people, and students. You choice — and you have a choice today. Very soon we're going to be voting on this government motion. Your choice is very simple.

Stand up, defend your Liberal cousins and maybe, just maybe, you might get to be a senator — one or more of you might get to be a senator. But you won't gain the respect of the people of Saskatchewan and you don't deserve it either. Your choice is stand up for your federal cousins with their backwards policies, their lack of meaningful tax reform, or join with us and call on the federal government for real, meaningful tax reform that has real meaningful effect for the people of not only Saskatchewan, but of all of Canada.

I invite you to vote with us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I do not intend to support the amendment, and I'd like to tell the

members of this House why.

There are times in politics, Mr. Speaker, when people have to stand to be counted. In a few moments, we're all going to have to stand to be counted and there are two things that the people of this province need to be asking of the members opposite.

First, to whom do they listen? Do they listen to their constituents on health boards who have written to the federal Finance minister and to the members opposite and said, these cuts are going to be devastating. Or do they listen to their friends in Ottawa, their federal big cousins who come and tell them what their positions should be?

But the much more fundamental question is this: politics is about choices and in a moment we're all going to be standing and telling the people of Saskatchewan what our choices are. And I warn the members opposite, this is a very carefully worded motion. What it says is 73 per cent of the cuts in the 1996 . . .

(1645)

The Speaker: — Order, order. I am going to call the . . . Order. I am going to call the minister to order, because I caution her she's spoken to the motion, and I've recognized her without giving warning to the Assembly because she is eligible to speak to the amendment; and as you have the floor now you may only address your remarks to the amendment, having previously spoken to the main motion.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Okay. What I'm saying to the members opposite is this: I am rejecting their amendment because I believe that the issue here is simple. Seventy-three per cent of federal cuts are to health, education, and social programs. What the amendment would do would set that aside. We don't care about that.

What we are saying and why we oppose the amendment is this: we are expressing our concern about a budget that would cut health, education, and social programs by 73 per cent. And I warn the members opposite, if they support the amendment setting aside the original motion, we will in this House and outside of this House tell the people of Saskatchewan again and again and again that you don't listen to them, that you are prepared to cut health, education, and social programs, by 73 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:48 p.m. until 4:58 p.m.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 9

Osika	Aldridge	McLane
Draude	McPherson	Belanger
Julé	Krawetz	Gantefoer

Nays — 30

Romanow	Mitchell	Wiens
MacKinnon	Lingenfelter	Shillington
Anguish	Tchorzewski	Whitmore
Upshall	Kowalsky	Crofford
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Trew	Bradley	Lorje
Nilson	Cline	Serby
Stanger	Hamilton	Murray
Wall	Kasperski	Sonntag
Jess	Murrell	Thomson

The division bells rang from 5:01 p.m. until 5:31 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 31

Romanow	Wiens	MacKinnon
Lingenfelter	Shillington	Tchorzewski
Whitmore	Upshall	Kowalsky
Crofford	Calvert	Pringle
Koenker	Trew	Bradley
Lorje	Scott	Teichrob
Nilson	Cline	Serby
Stanger	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Sonntag	Jess	Murrell
Thomson		

Nays — nil

The Assembly adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

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