

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of gravely concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan concerning the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. The prayer reads:

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

The names that are on the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina and Mortlach, Caronport, and other small communities in southern Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The people have signed from numerous places in southern Saskatchewan, including Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Krawetz: — 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:

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 all from Regina.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of the people concerned about the future of 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 from Regina.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names of people from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the closure of 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 the closure of the

Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition are from Regina, from Moose Jaw, from Mossbank, all over southern Saskatchewan.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today again to present petitions as well, names from people 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.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by the concerned citizens of Regina.

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

And the people who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Earl Grey, Silton, Nokomis, and many from Regina.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — The following petitions for private Bills are hereby presented and laid on the Table.

By Mr. Pringle:

Of the St. Paul's Hospital, Grey Nuns of Saskatoon in the province of Saskatchewan;

By Mr. Pringle:

Of Sisters of Charity, Grey Nuns in the province of Saskatchewan;

By Mr. Whitmore:

Of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities in the province of Saskatchewan; and

By Ms. Hamilton:

Of Luther College, Regina, in the province of Saskatchewan.

According to order, a petition regarding an increase in security deposits on rental properties presented on March 28, 1996 has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) is found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received; and

According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and found to be regular and therefore are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Heppner: — Notice of question. I give notice that I shall on . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'd gone past that. You have notice of question?

Mr. Heppner: — Yes.

The Speaker: — If the hon. member would like to request leave to revert to notices for motions and questions.

Mr. Heppner: — I ask leave to revert to notice of question.

Leave granted.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Notice of question. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Education, regarding the funding of the province's K to 12 system: what will be the total cost to school boards if Saskatchewan teachers receive a 2 per cent increase in salary as a result of the current contract negotiations; and (2) does the minister intend to honour her commitment to cover all increased costs to school divisions including hikes to salaries and benefits for all teachers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that all members of the House will respect and appreciate the importance of hard-working constituency assistants. And I'm very pleased, on behalf of our caucus, to introduce those who assist us in our duties when we're required to be absent from our offices.

First of all I'd like to introduce Tarra Rathgeber and her husband Louis from my home constituency of Melville; Laurie Audette, sitting in your Speaker's gallery — Laurie Audette from Melfort-Tisdale, Loretta Ritchie from Saltcoats, Jeff Hryhoriw from Canora-Pelly, Cheryl Turanich, Arm River; Linda Griffith from Kelvington-Wadena.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in the west gallery, a very fine group of young people. And it is

my pleasure to introduce them to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature on behalf of two of my colleagues, the member from Regina Coronation Park and the member from Regina Sherwood, since many of these students live in all three constituencies.

This is the grade 12 class of Riffel High School. There are 100 of them. And they are accompanied by their teachers Bill Allen, Gary Dionne, and Dave Stouse.

Now I know they have already had a tour of the building, and I know that they are going to be very interested in what happens in the House in the next hour or so. And after that the three of us hope to have some time to spend with them to answer their questions and to have some refreshments with them.

So I would ask all members to join me in giving them a warm welcome, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sintaluta Train Derailment

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate the residents of Sintaluta, Indian Head, and Wolseley for the community effort that was fundamental in ensuring the safety and well-being of all Sintaluta residents yesterday.

As you are no doubt aware, Mr. Speaker, there was a serious train derailment in Sintaluta which resulted in a number of cars leaving the tracks inside the town limits. One flat-deck car left the tracks and slammed into a nearby house causing extensive damage to the home of the Banks family. Another car carrying dangerous goods also left the tracks and immediately caught fire.

Fortunately no one was seriously hurt, and because of the quick response of the community's volunteer fire department, Indian Head RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), CP (Canadian Pacific) rail's emergency response team, Environment and Resource Management spill control unit, municipal governments, EMO (Emergency Measures Organization), Department of Health, and the local government headed by mayor Dave Damm, the safety of the residents was ensured.

I would also like to thank the communities of Indian Head and Wolseley for their support in providing a haven for the people that had to be evacuated.

Citizens of Saskatchewan have always proved themselves by joining together to provide support and assistance whenever needed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Sport Athlete of the Year Awards

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, last night I, along with my

colleagues from Kelvington-Wadena, and from Canora-Pelly, had the opportunity to attend the Saskatchewan Sport Athlete of the Year awards banquet at Queensbury Downs in Regina. Mr. Speaker, I was deeply impressed with all the athletes I met at the dinner. Their dedication to their sport is astounding, as is their ability.

Among other things, Saskatchewan produces some of the finest athletes in the country and the world. The number of championships and national and world records held by the athletes honoured is certainly proof of that.

On behalf of my colleagues in the official opposition, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all the award winners and nominees honoured at this banquet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Z99's Ninth Radio-thon

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Between train wrecks and budgets and other events, we might have missed the beginning of another regular yet significant Regina event and I'm happy to correct that oversight this morning.

C.C. and Lori Lindsay from station Z99 here in Regina are at it again. They are hosting the ninth annual radio-thon from the Cornwall Centre. The purpose, Mr. Speaker, of this year's radio-thon is to raise funds for a new pediatric playroom for the Allan Blair clinic, cancer clinic. It's a more than worthy cause, as have been the previous eight.

Mr. Speaker, C.C. and Lori started yesterday morning at 6 a.m. and they're carrying on until 5 p.m. this afternoon. For the numerically challenged in the Assembly — and I point no fingers — that's 35 straight hours of broadcasting without a nap. Mr. Speaker, there are three ways we can support Z99's radio-thon. We can call 522-5437 and make a pledge; we can fax a pledge to 352-1996; or we can pledge in person at the radio-thon headquarters at the Cornwall Centre, as I plan to later this day.

If Z99's C.C. and Lori Lindsay can stay up for 35 hours for a worthy cause, the least the rest of us can do is help them out and I know we all will. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

High School Basketball Championships

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to offer congratulations to some young athletes in my constituency. Last weekend, the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association held its annual basketball championships. Attending the final for the fourth year in a row from Thunder Creek were the Caronport Cougars boys' basketball team. Led by coach Gib Hinz, these dedicated young athletes gave it their best, with Nelson Duerkson netting 15 points in the final against Humboldt.

For their efforts, Caronport returned home with the silver

medal. While they came up with the silver rather than the gold, they can add it to the bronze that they got in 1995 and the golds in both 1993 and '94.

Mr. Speaker, coming from the Moose Jaw district, I would also like to congratulate the Central Collegiate girls' basketball team who took home the 3A title. The member from Regina Sherwood is undoubtedly proud of his former high school. Mr. Speaker, I am also certain that you are also pleased with the achievements of your constituents.

In closing, I'm sure that other members of the House will join me in congratulating these young people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Procrastination Week

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I noticed the other day in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* something that caught my eye, and I just want to quote. It said, on March 10 the mayors of Athens and Sparta signed a peace declaration formally ending the Peloponnesian War. It was exactly 2,400 years after Athens surrendered.

This reminded me, Mr. Speaker, that last year I got up to make a statement on National Procrastination Week, and I said I was going to do a statement last week, and I started to but I didn't finish it. I just didn't get around to it. Then the Premier called the election, Mr. Speaker, and I forgot all about it. And I have vowed to make up for last year's statement by giving a bell-ringer of a statement this year — at the first opportunity, of course. And I vowed I would intend to keep my promise because you know we always keep our promises. But I've been busy, and on Monday is already April. And come to think of it, I don't even remember National Procrastination Week being declared this year. So actually it hasn't been declared yet anyway, so I think maybe I'll just wait for awhile and see what happens.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Male Athlete of the Year

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment as well to acknowledge the hard work of SaskSport, the SaskSport committee, and the dinner they presented last night and the awards that were also handed out.

In particular I want to congratulate a young gentleman from the Kipling area, lived in Kipling for awhile. Jim Wingert was honoured as the male athlete of the year for his accomplishments in weight lifting at the Special Olympics, and so I'd like to say congratulations, Jim, best wishes in your future endeavours. And certainly all the other athletes deserve praise — those who won, those who were recognized.

And I think not just the winners last night but all athletes across this province who give of their time and efforts to entertain us, whether it's through the winter months, whether it's through hockey or swimming or whatever avenue, I want to just extend

my congratulations to all those involved in sport in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Shell Lake Volunteers

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Volunteerism is a vital part of life in rural Saskatchewan. Entertainment that residents of large centres take for granted would not be possible in many centres in my constituency without the efforts of a great many volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize today the efforts of the volunteers in the community of Shell Lake. Yesterday evening to this evening and tomorrow, the Shell Lake Patchwork Players will be presenting the play *The Curious Savage* by John Patrick in the Shell Lake Lions hall. These dinner theatre performances are sponsored by the Shell Lake tourism committee, and all of the proceeds are turned back into encouraging tourism in the area. There are 11 actors in the play, every one of them a volunteer. So are the people who built the set and made the costumes and are serving the meal. It is a very active spirit in Shell Lake, Mr. Speaker, that makes this place a great place to live. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Conservation Program

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe there's an old folk song with a line that goes, if I ever get in my hand a dollar again, I'm going to squeeze it till the eagle grins.

Fourteen schools in the Saskatoon West School Division have just squeezed an extra \$36,000 out of their energy consumption budgets. The three-year program they have undertaken will result ultimately in a reduction of energy use of up to 40 per cent. In a time when all governments and all institutions need to put every available penny towards delivery of services, this is a substantial contribution. And I want to publicly acknowledge the students, the teachers, and the custodial staff of the school division for their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, these savings have been achieved step by step, bit by bit; no grand gestures, just small, common sense ones — and all have taken part. For example, teachers formed clubs in which students conducted energy audits which led to savings, which led to further energy efficiency measures, such as the purchase of state-of-the art equipment, and so on.

This program is under the umbrella of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society's destination conservation program, a program designed to save money and to protect the environment.

I congratulate the Saskatoon West School Division for doing both. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Relief

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister presented a budget yesterday that featured no new taxes; however, what she failed to mention was the fact that her government will collect \$100 million more in tax revenue this year than last. Of this figure, about \$62 million will come from the individual income tax, directly out of the pockets of Saskatchewan residents.

Will the Minister of Finance explain why she made no commitment whatsoever to tax relief for the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, thank you very much for that question.

I'd like to clarify the facts here. In fact we did make provision in this budget for tax relief for the people of Saskatchewan. Last year we reduced income taxes so that when people fill out their 1995 income tax form they're going to find a \$75 reduction in the debt reduction surtax — a tax cut for every taxpayer in Saskatchewan. In 1996 when they get their income tax form, that number will go up to \$150 for every individual taxpayer in Saskatchewan — \$300 per family.

So I think the first thing is to establish the facts. We did reduce income taxes for people in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the budget document clearly states that, and I quote: "One of the best ways to create consumer confidence is to ease the tax burden."

Yet at no point during the minister's budget address did I hear the mention of any meaningful tax reductions for the average Saskatchewan resident. The only commitment made is to review the provincial tax system.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents want a firm commitment for more meaningful tax relief, not another study. Will the minister explain why there is no firm tax reduction plan so the people of this province will know the stifling taxation of her government will be lifted at some point in the future?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I think what this government wants to do, it wants to be responsible and credible when it promises tax cuts.

We said, as we can afford them, we will. We have introduced income tax cuts. But we're not going to be like the Liberals. We're not going to go around in an election campaign and say look, we can reduce your sales tax four points. We can spend

money here, and you know what we can do? We can do it because all you have to do is assume the economy is going to grow by 8 per cent.

So if you have a wonderful imagination that works for you. But we're going to govern responsibly and credibly and we're going to prepare this province for the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I know the Finance minister had made a great deal out of the fact that one measure was in the government's budget which would put \$150 into the pockets of 6,000 low income people. But I doubt very seriously that these people consider 12.50 more per month as the answer to their problems.

Mr. Speaker, what they need is a government that will provide tax relief because, as the budget document so aptly put it, one of the best ways to create consumer confidence is to ease the tax burden.

Instead of insulting low income people, will the minister make a commitment to meaningful tax relief to help create an environment for business to flourish and meaningful job opportunities for low income people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking the member for the question, but also pointing out the member doesn't understand the budget. That tax cut is not a tax cut for low income people alone; 6,000 low income people will no longer pay income taxes at all. But every taxpayer in the province will get a tax cut.

Now again, when we promise tax cuts, we deliver. We don't go round like your counterparts in Ottawa and say, elect us, we'll eliminate the GST (goods and services tax) and then spend the next three years figuring out how you're going to persuade the same electors that taking the GST, spreading it further, is eliminating it. Even their own MPs (Member of Parliament) don't believe that story. John Nunziata says it's not eliminating the GST to harmonize it. I say to the members opposite, we're going to govern credibly, and we're going to mean what we say. When we say there's an income tax cut, there is an income tax cut, and it is in the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Government Amalgamation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if there was any doubt about this government's plans to force municipal governments into amalgamation, they were put to rest yesterday when the Finance minister delivered her budget speech. This NDP (New Democratic Party) government announced that revenue-sharing grants will be reduced by \$20 million or 25 per cent in two year's time.

Will the minister in charge of Municipal Government confirm

that this reduction is meant as a means of tightening the purse-strings of local government so tight they are left with no option except amalgamation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I find it a little interesting that the members opposite don't mind standing up in this House and reading us all the Liberal budgets in other provinces. The one they may want to read today is the Liberal budget in New Brunswick, where they take \$19 million out of municipalities. So I guess it's okay for a Liberal government in New Brunswick to say, we're taking \$19 million out of municipal government, but it's not okay for us to say: sorry, to protect health, education, and social programs, we're going to have to reduce funding elsewhere.

This government is committed to protecting our high quality of life, our health, our education, our social programs, and we stand by our record in that sphere, and we will remind people of your record in that sphere.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — I believe, Mr. Speaker, we're probably the only province that has already taken about 40 per cent of grants away from municipalities and then turn around and dump another \$20 million on top of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Let's not forget the minister promised that 10 per cent of VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues or \$10 million would also be returned to local communities. This money of course is not coming to our towns and villages because the minister and her government broke another promise.

The minister also stood in this House on a number of occasions and proclaimed that there is no top-down plan by the NDP government to force amalgamation onto municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, in both cases I took the minister at her word, as did local leaders across this province. Obviously this government's version of amalgamation will mean the creation of a whole new bureaucracy similar to what we have in Health.

Will the minister explain if the end result of her government's amalgamation plan is the elimination of RM (rural municipality) and town councils?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, no matter how many times the members opposite say we have some secret plan to amalgamate won't make it true. We have no secret plan to amalgamate.

But you know, the mayors made a good point. The federation of Canadian mayors knew exactly where their problem was coming from. Recently they said:

The mayors of Canada's major cities have joined forces to

warn about the impact of impending federal funding cuts. Members of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities say cuts will have a devastating effect on social programs, leaving municipalities to take up the slack.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, when the municipalities phone my office and this government, I'm stepping aside and saying, it's Mr. Martin who you need to be talking to. That's the source of your difficulty. And I think when push comes to shove, they understand that.

I'll make only one other point. We believe that there have to be changes in the organization of municipal governments. We're willing to work with them. But we have to change to meet the new demands of the new century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Local Government Funding Cuts

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance as well. Madam Minister, for months and months we've heard your government condemning Ottawa for offloading its financial problems onto the provinces. And again you do it again this morning here.

So how do you address the problem? By doing exactly the same thing to municipalities. Municipalities and local ratepayers are going to take a \$20 million hit next year. And that's on top of the \$10 million VLT hit that you've provided them with.

SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) president Murray Westby said, our members understand all too well the Finance minister's concern about fiscal downloading. And even the federal government has not dreamt about cutting transfer payments by more than 30 per cent in a single year.

Madam Minister, how do you justify this massive offloading on municipalities and local taxpayers after the way that you've criticized the federal government for doing exactly the same thing to you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I welcome the question, Mr. Speaker. Our criticism of the federal government was very pointed and it was this: it was that 73 per cent, three-quarters, of all of the cuts in the recent federal budget were to health, education, social programs. We have said consistently the issue is priorities; that these are the wrong priorities for this government and for the people of this province.

And this is a defining moment in this province because while Liberals are willing to have massive cuts, hack and slash at health, education, and social programs, while Tories in Ontario and in Alberta are willing to hack and slash at health, education, and social programs, this government will defend health, education, and social programs. We believe it's essential to our quality of life in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Madam Minister, yesterday's budget promised no new taxes. But because of the massive offloading on local ratepayers, that simply isn't going to be the case and you know it, and everyone else knows it. In fact SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) president Sinclair Harrison is already predicting a drastic mill rate increase next year as a result of the offloading from you.

So the federal government dumps on you, you in turn dump on the municipalities, and the municipalities have no choice but to raise taxes for local taxpayers who always get it in the end.

Madam Minister, your budget is going to result in huge property tax increases next year. How can you say that there are no new taxes to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, when we found out that we were going to receive \$250 million in one transfer cut alone, never mind the other offloading, we could have taken an easy way out too. We could have said . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that's right, what we're going to do is we're going to just have to raise taxes.

What we did instead was, we made some very difficult decisions about our own government. We cut administrative costs. We ended duplication. We looked at ways to deliver services better. And tragically, some people had to lose jobs.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we're saying to municipal governments is that we cut ourselves first. We cut ourselves hardest. The biggest cut in this budget is a cut to our own government — \$50 million. And we expect them to do . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I'll ask all members of the Assembly to come to order and to allow the Minister of Finance to respond to the question that's been put to her. Order. All members of the Assembly . . . Order. When I ask for order from all members, I mean all members.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're saying to our partners at the municipal level is that we were told when we went around this province that there are savings to be achieved at the municipal level as well. And we're willing to work with them to do that.

But I'll tell you, we can't bury our head in the sand and say the municipal structure should stay exactly as it is. We have to change to prepare for the new century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Education Funding Cuts

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the minister responsible for hidden tax increases. Madam Minister, you are offloading . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now when putting a question to ministers in the Assembly, it is important that in addressing it, it

be addressed to the minister in the context of their responsibility in the House, and I'll ask the member to rephrase to whom he's directing his question, please.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Finance, who has hidden some taxes. Madam Minister, you are offloading education costs onto the property tax base as well. You are planning a \$7 million cut to K to 12 education in the '98-99; at the same time, you're negotiating salary increases with the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation). That's going to mean fewer teachers and it's going to mean larger classrooms, and it's going to mean another hit on the property taxpayer.

Madam Minister, you have criticized the federal Liberals for offloading education tax onto the provinces. Why are you now doing exactly the same thing — offloading education costs for the 21st century onto local taxpayers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the member opposite. Education is another area, the K to 12 system, in which we believe we have to ensure that there's a quality system. But we also believe — and we were told as we went around the province — that there are administrative savings that need to be achieved.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting a little tired of the members opposite, the Tories: taxes, taxes, taxes. You'd think they never raised a tax in their life. Let me read you a quick list of the taxes that they raised in this province in the 1980s. They introduced the flat tax on income, raised income taxes; they raised the corporate income tax; they raised the corporate capital tax; they raised the gas tax; they raised cigarette taxes five times; and they raised the sales tax, all in the interests of adding about a billion dollars a year to the deficit. So I don't think the members opposite should be talking about tax cuts. They have a record of raising taxes and raising deficits.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, the Premier himself admitted this offloading is going to lead to fewer teachers and larger classrooms. How does this square with your commitment to guarantee that our children continue to receive quality education in the classroom?

Madam Minister, those numbers don't add up. You're negotiating a salary increase on behalf of local school boards; at the same time, you're cutting their funding. At the same time, the school has been hit with other major cost increases such as your 12 per cent SaskPower rate hike. Doesn't make any sense. And the people you are going to have pay for it are the local taxpayers and the children in the classroom.

Madam Minister, why are you offloading education costs onto the school boards, and how much damage is this going to do to our educating children in the province now and into the 21st century?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite are as concerned about education as they seem to be today, we'd like to ask them why they were not willing to participate with us when we said, we want to publicly express our concern about a federal budget in which 73 per cent of all the cuts are cuts to health, education, and social programs — 73 per cent.

All members of this legislature should have stood together and said, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, we do not support a budget in which the majority of the cuts are to the priorities that these people place highest.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have done the best job we can to find savings in other parts of government to protect the core programs of this province — health, education, social programs — because we believe this is one of the reasons why Saskatchewan is the best place in the best country in which to live.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister noted during her budget address yesterday that government departments and Crown corporations will invest over \$630 million this year in capital projects. This figure substantiates what the Saskatchewan Construction Association has been telling us. However, it also creates a great deal of concern because we all know that the union-preference policies of this NDP government inflate project costs greatly.

Will the Minister of Labour explain how he and his government can justify continue using union-preference policies which inflate costs, at the same time they claim not to have money for essential services?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member should understand that the philosophy behind the so-called union-preference policy, the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) policy, is a philosophy which has been in existence in the United States of America, I think since about 1947, with the United States federal government — in that bastion of socialism, in that bastion of supporting of trade union movements — in the United States. It's been a policy of the federal government, I think since 1979 or 8 in some form or other.

And what it attempts to do is to make sure there's a level playing-field with respect to the bidding of certain contracts with respect to certain Crown tendering operations. That's all there is to it.

Now these people can get out there and bash all the union people that they want all the time, because that's all they do. They can say, like the Tories, that they want to make Saskatchewan, Alabama North. They can say that the working men and women of this province don't contribute to the

economy and the well-being of our community.

That may be their position and it may be the Tory position. I tell you, it isn't the right position and it isn't the Saskatchewan and it isn't our position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has it mistaken, because what we are representing are the taxpayers of this province and not any special group.

Mr. Speaker, we have shown in this House, using two specific cases as examples, how the unfair union-preference policies of the NDP government inflate costs by an average of 25 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, union preference could cost the taxpayers of this province as much as \$150 million in additional costs if it's applied to all the capital projects planned by government departments.

In the interest of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, will the minister make a commitment in this House today that all such projects will be based on fair, open tendering and not union preference?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, all morning we've witnessed the opposition parties, with respect to this budget, using figures and figuring how to use their figures like this — pulling it out of the air. Pull them like that, out of the air.

They remind me sometimes of my very dear and close friends in the press gallery, just pulling up the figures out like that — \$150 million the member says with respect to union tendering, when the statistics show that of the percentage of tendering that has taken place, as the Minister of Labour indicated yesterday, amounts to approximately \$15 million.

Now there's no use me saying what the figures are because the hon. member will get up, I guarantee you, and you know what he'll do with the next figure? — like that. He'll pull it out of the air, just like that.

Do you run your business that way? I can't believe that he runs his business that way. I'm sure he's a successful business operator. Please try to bring that kind of an approach to the management of public affairs, and base it on facts. It'd be helpful.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart, saddened for the business people in Saskatchewan. In yesterday's budget there was no evidence whatsoever that the Minister of Economic Development and his colleague, the Minister of Finance, are even singing from the same song sheet when we talk about sustainable economic growth for the

province into the next century.

The Minister of Economic Development at least paid lip-service to job creation in his *Partnership for Growth*. The Premier even announced in his infomercial that jobs were the number one priority. And at the same time, the Minister of Finance was preparing a budget that totally ignored both of them. It's an indication to me that the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister acknowledge that the province needs relief from stifling taxation, oppressive labour legislation, and over-regulation right now, if we're really going to help private business create jobs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Unfortunately, when you get a question from the Liberals, you've got to start first of all at correcting the facts.

We have a report here done on our budget by Nesbitt Burns — Nesbitt Burns — outsiders; got no vested interest in what the facts are, as the members opposite do. What do they say about our economy in 1996? They say 1996, economic growth forecast for Saskatchewan is 2.6 per cent. This will be well above the Canadian average.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — By the way, their comment on the budget was thumbs up, thumbs up. So what I would say to the member opposite is . . . I'd say a number a things. I would say we have — unlike our counterparts in Ottawa whose economic development plan is about the way the Premier said it was, some here, some there — we have a plan. We have a long-term plan for jobs in this province and in every budget we implement part of the plan. We implemented part of the plan in this budget and we will continue in subsequent budgets so there are more jobs for people in the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to the Minister of Economic Development on many occasions about my concerns about what the government is doing to destroy rural Saskatchewan. His department had one small program that was of some benefit to the small-business people in rural Saskatchewan. And yesterday he sat back and cheered as the Minister of Finance cut and slashed with her budget knife.

Mr. Speaker, the small business loans association program provided capital for the development of small business in Saskatchewan through a loan, not a grant. Yesterday this program, along with many of the other funds for rural Saskatchewan, was slashed by 50 per cent. Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why he's so determined to neglect the potential for small business in rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, once again with these Liberal questions, you've got to start by correcting the facts. The small business loan program is intact. It's still there. I don't know which budget they were watching yesterday. It might have been some other budget.

But I will say this. In each and every budget since 1991 we have had targeted tax reductions to create jobs: '91 reduced the tax rate for small business; '92 reduced taxes on 1-800 numbers, a factor in getting three call centres into the province; '93, 4, 5, cuts in manufacturing and processing taxes, 3,000 new jobs; oil royalties restructured in '94, hundreds of new jobs. And there are other tax reduction measures in this budget: aviation fuel and a truckers' tax change. So we do have a plan. The plan is being implemented and it is working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill No. 62 — An Act to amend
The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
(Ordering Implementation Negated by Crown/"OINC")**

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move a Bill to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act (Ordering Implementation Negated by Crown/"OINC") be now 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: — Before orders of the day, I'd like to bring a ruling to the House.

Yesterday the Opposition House Leader raised a point of order concerning the language the Minister of Health used while responding to a question from the member for Humboldt during Wednesday's oral question period. The Government House Leader then requested a decision on the member for Arm River's member's statement. At the time, I reserved my ruling so that I could review the *Hansard* and consider the points raised by the members. I am now prepared to rule on these matters.

Over recent days, there has been a development that is giving me considerable concern. Members from all caucuses have characterized their colleagues in demeaning terms, which is entirely unworthy of this Assembly. Humour, when in good taste, is appropriate. But when it becomes personal and offensive, it is unacceptable. Recently the tone, manner, and intention of certain remarks have caused disorder. All members, I am sure, could cite examples of personally offensive remarks from the last weeks.

With regard to the point of order, I find the language used by the Minister of Health and the intent of the language used by

the member for Arm River to be unparliamentary. These are but the latest examples of how this unfortunate state of affairs has escalated and become increasingly personal. Other members must also bear responsibility for similar comments, and I have full confidence in the ability of members to engage in forceful and spirited debate without having to resort to such avenues. I ask all members to show due respect to their colleagues and their institution.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I have the answer to question no. 27. If I could have the assistance of a page, I will table it.

The Speaker: — Question 27 is answered.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the government introduced its blaming budget and there's no new day dawning for anyone in this province — no new job creation measures, no new ideas and more of the same cold, gloomy weather that we see outside today.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin talking once again about jobs, and as I said before, this was sadly lacking in the budget. We see here that the government is laying off hundreds of employees. We were told earlier this year that they planned on laying off some 214 Crop Insurance personnel. Now we hear that they will be completely closing the Ag Credit Saskatchewan office in Swift Current, costing some 63 jobs in that city. That's a severe blow to rural Saskatchewan.

In the city of Swift Current alone it will cost some \$5 million a year in additional payroll. That city was already hard hit by Crop Insurance restructuring and now this. It struggles daily with the PST-free (provincial sales tax) Medicine Hat for its retail customers. The government has now wrenched at the heart of its economic well-being and is failing to offer any hope. What hope was there in this budget for a place like Swift Current to create jobs. The government can go ahead and create another REDA (regional economic development authorities) and promote some tourism, but these things won't really have their positive effect until this government quits stifling this province with high taxes.

On the issue of job losses in Swift Current, I think congratulations are deserved for the member from Swift Current for such an effective job of lobbying for your colleagues. I'm sure the member will enjoy his visit home to his

seat this weekend. Given the reception that he's going to get, I might suggest he go over to the Liberal office and grab a stack of memberships. He might have at least some luck convincing people to buy something because I'm sure they won't be buying this budget.

Another problem, Mr. Speaker, with the idea of cutting jobs in rural areas is that rural areas tend to have more discouraged workers. Discouraged workers are people who don't get counted among the officially employed in this province. They don't get counted because they're not looking for work because they don't actually believe there's any work to be found. In small towns where a person always knows all the employers, there are often many of these types of people. By making lay-offs like they did to essential rural services, this government is not only creating more jobless people but more discouraged workers in our rural areas. Sadly, they are not dealing with the problem.

Mr. Speaker, in so far as jobs are concerned, we see here in the budget the government's rosy projections again. We see them tell us, we'll have all this job growth. The funny thing is that they're saying there are now 460,000 jobs, when in reality there are only 446,000. If they plan on getting to the 481,000 by the end of the century, the members opposite have a big hole to dig themselves out of.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that they are undaunted by this challenge because they don't plan on making any of these targets anyhow. They don't plan on any new day dawning. They just plan on getting through to the next century or preparing for the next century as they care to call it.

Mr. Speaker, the blaming budget brought down yesterday could also be called the budget of threats. Not only did this government engage in months of fearmongering, they are now going to make thinly veiled threats to municipalities in this province. This government is going to maintain municipal revenue-sharing grants for only one year. After that, the government will be making a substantial cut to municipal revenue sharing.

The whole point behind this all seems to be not completely open but somewhat tricky. The government comes out and tells municipalities that they are introducing an Act to help them cooperate and then the Premier says that if they don't cooperate, he'll have to consider amalgamation. Now they've raised the stakes, and they've said that they will be slashing revenue-sharing grants. Is the idea here that this government is being fair to the many municipalities of this province in giving them warning, or is it something else?

One could easily argue, Mr. Speaker, that this government intends to use this threat of a \$20 million cut only to put more pressure on these municipal governments to voluntarily amalgamate so this government can get its way without looking like the bad guy. I look forward to the day when I hear the members opposite finally admit that this was their plan after all.

If that was their plan all along, then I would say it's a plan that fits well into this blaming theme of the budget. Use money as a

threat to get municipalities to amalgamate, and then this government will be able to blame the RMs and the villages for amalgamating if they ever complain about it. It's all about blaming, and the more we read through, the more tricks the members opposite seem to be able to pull out of the blame bag.

Mr. Speaker, this blaming budget made a significant hit on rural Saskatchewan. The greatest losses of jobs to the public service was made to the Department of Highways. We have here 97 in-scope positions gone, 43 out-of-scope eliminated, and no vacancies. All told there are some 140 positions gone in the department.

I don't think the minister travels on these highways. Not only are they a mess but all too often they are unsafe. The Minister of Finance probably wouldn't know because you don't notice this up in the Executive Air Cheyenne aircraft. This province is a bad enough place to drive any time, but this is made far worse when the highways are not maintained. Just this week we had over 50 car crashes around the city of Regina, thanks to the icy weather. Last weekend you could hardly drive more than 60 kilometres an hour on large parts of the No. 2 Highway out in my constituency, because of ice.

Throughout the winter there have been many occasions like this, where the ice packs on the highways and the highway crews have such few resources to manage this that the dangerous conditions and accidents are the result. Basically, there's a threat to public safety here that the minister is making worse.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm deeply concerned about these cuts. We've been getting calls about . . . people worried about whether their depot will be lost. I see here the government is closing 26 equipment storage facilities in what it calls "streamlining". Well the people who drive these icy roads will probably not be very amused when they see that this government has termed their decision to threaten public safety as nothing more than "streamlining".

When you look at the budget when it comes to highways, all I can say is that it's a real shame that this government forgot about the new day dawning and simply skipped right to preparing for the next century. It's cold comfort for the many people in rural areas who depend upon these highways. It's cold comfort because with fewer people working on our highways, we really have to count on a new day dawning with lots of hot sun to get rid of that ice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — That's our highways maintenance system after this budget. It's also interesting, Mr. Speaker, because it reminds me of the Premier's comments in the House today. He keeps telling the Leader of the Third Party he doesn't want Saskatchewan to be the Alabama of the North. Well I agree with the Premier, but I would remind the Premier that down South in places like Alabama, when they get snow they just wait for the new day to dawn and melt it all down. And I say to the Premier, keep to your word; we don't want to be the Alabama of the North. We don't want their snow removal

system.

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite aren't really trying to make us the Alabama of the North when it comes to the highway maintenance. Maybe if they lower everyone's expectations to believing that our highways won't get maintained like they should, they once again can deflect the blame elsewhere. Maybe their goal is to get everyone to simply blame the weather. You know, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to pick a scapegoat, it's probably best to pick a scapegoat that the members opposite could pick on, because everybody does talk about the weather.

Mr. Speaker, while cuts to the highways are a major attack on rural Saskatchewan, this government's attack doesn't end there. I see the cuts to ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) offices which takes effect in the near future will affect my constituents with a closure of an office in Moose Jaw. I see, however, that the minister shows some sense of fairness when he decided to cut his own office in Watrous, the constituency of Watrous. I am concerned, however, that we have all of these jobs gone, including another four rural service centres.

What plans are there to replace these jobs? Often these jobs provide valued off-farm income. When it's gone, problems are created for farm families, and the minister appears to be oblivious to this. I would suggest that the Minister of Agriculture should try and remember that just because things start looking up in the farm sector for a year or two, it doesn't mean that it'll remain this way forever.

(1100)

The members opposite can say what they like about the federal level of government, but in so far as things like the Crow were concerned, I am sure that they are all well aware of the arguments that assert the transportation subsidies discourage local processing and value added production. The members opposite just have to remember that high taxes and too many regulations also discourage local processing.

While the members opposite complain about Mr. Goodale, I'm sure they're also thankful that he had had a herd that had a cow with the mad cow disease culled as early as he did when he assumed his ministership as Agriculture minister. The court is out, however, on how the history will judge our own minister for how he handled ILT (Infectious Laryngotracheitis).

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, in so far as ACS is concerned, I'm anxious to hear how the government intends to resolve or wind up those loans that are outstanding. How do they expect to handle these loans? And we're here in the opposition wondering for more details to convey to our constituents who have these very grave concerns.

Mr. Speaker, in this blaming budget there's a vast number of concerns for Saskatchewan people. While reviewing this budget, I became quite alarmed about how this government uses numbers. I said yesterday that I'd hoped this government would be more concerned about people than numbers. It's sad

to say, but they appear to be more concerned about wasting their time blaming and fiddling with figures than they are with the plight of the people in this province.

I was quite shocked to discover that while this government goes around using all sorts of figures about how terrible transfer cuts are, they can't get their numbers straight. When you look to page 9 of the budget speech, it says that federal cuts to transfers are \$114 million. The \$114 million was the number of the week.

Last week it was a 73 per cent cut. And before that I heard \$106 million. Before that, I've even heard some say \$200 million. Pick your number. But it's simply just good old-fashioned blaming and it's really all just a waste of time.

Unfortunately while it says the total cut is \$114 million on page 9 of the budget, on page 74 it goes on to say something different. If the members opposite would look to that page — go ahead — and you'd soon notice that it points out that the total reduction in federal transfers is only \$43 million.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite are going to persist in blaming, they should get the facts straight. At least use the same number. In one part of this book, they fiddle with the numbers and exclude equalization, even though it's worth millions. And later on, they do use the right number.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, if they insist on blaming, should make a completely convincing performance. And I think it's a major oversight on their part and it's just cost them a few votes with the academy. They just might have to return the Oscars.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the comments from the member from Regina Coronation Park who is so meticulous with numbers. When he prepares for his remarks in this House, I hope he will make sure to straighten this all out. Better yet, provide us with an explanation of why he and his colleagues made this slip-up in what was otherwise a flawless performance of blaming.

Mr. Speaker, while this is a flaw in an otherwise flawless performance of blaming, this budget has a real, deep flaw when it comes to taxes. If the members opposite looked to the same page that I referred to — and that was page 74, for the benefit of the member from Regina South — the government is going to receive another \$100 million in tax revenue this year over last. That works out to a 3.3 per cent increase. And this follows last year, a year in which their revenues were 130 million more than expected from taxes. That windfall comes on the heels of a five-year period in which the total haul from tax revenues to this government went up by 33 per cent, or over 600 million a year.

Mr. Speaker, you don't see too many households in this province — or businesses, for that matter — who received 33 per cent more in revenues over the last five years. There aren't too many families that experienced an income windfall last year, except perhaps for the Bryant family. There aren't too many families in this province who are expecting an increase in

income of 3.3 per cent this year either. Certainly not workers at SaskTel or the employees this government laid off from the Highways department yesterday.

Given these windfall revenues that more than offset a meagre \$43 million reduction in federal transfer payments, you would have to wonder what this government is doing, Mr. Speaker.

The papers in this budget show once again that we pay the highest personal income taxes of almost every province in the country. This government offers some petty tax breaks and yet is still collecting more money from us. Of that \$100 million increase in tax revenue this year, a full \$62 million is coming straight from personal income taxes.

With revenues like this, I would like to know why this government cannot engage in real tax reform. What are they doing with all of this money? Mr. Speaker, if this government would engage in some real form of tax relief, some of the mom-and-pop shops that employ people in this province could get back to hiring staff.

Instead, this government is happy having 4,000 fewer people working this year and keep on collecting more tax money from those who are lucky enough to work. They'd rather see more taxes being paid than more people working and paying taxes. Human dignity is not an issue with the members opposite. It's not a concern, because their friends already have jobs. And as we've seen in recent weeks, some of them have pretty fat jobs too. Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues will have many more concerns to raise on this budget too, and I look forward to their comments.

I must say that there is no way I can support this budget. There's no possible way that I could ever support a document that blames others and then simply avoids dealing with the real problems of Saskatchewan people.

Saskatchewan people deserve better. They deserve politicians who will spend their time trying to make their lives a little better. The members opposite promised a new day dawning, but only delivered the dawning of a new day of disappointment.

The province continues to be plagued by problems of high taxes, lack of jobs, underemployment; and rural Saskatchewan continues to be under siege. Under these circumstances, there's no way that my constituents want to support this budget, and on their behalf, I will be voting against it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind Beauchesne's, section 168, which states in part:

Reflections upon the character or actions of the Speaker may be punished, as breaches of privilege.

And recognizing that it has been some time since your election

to the position of Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that this is my first opportunity to enter into debate since that election and I do hope that it's appropriate for me to — and that it's still in order for me — to congratulate you publicly on your election and to say some kind words in this regard.

I might add that I did say some kind words, Mr. Speaker, to the media the day that you were elected, although I wasn't able to do it to the House. But the media, being what they are, choose to ignore kind words and choose to insert other words if such are said. I didn't.

Mr. Speaker, since your election you have shown us your excellent command of the Chair. This is no surprise, especially for those of us in the NDP caucus who, since your election in 1988 as caucus Chair, have seen firsthand the qualities that made you an excellent Chair of our caucus and will make you an excellent Speaker.

You showed a strong knowledge of the parliamentary process. You displayed great patience. I might say you were also appropriately impatient and kept the process going. You are attentive, you are firm, and you blended this with the right amount of humour, and your rulings were wise.

Now that's not to say that I agreed totally with the way you handled everything. For example, I found the daily two-bits and a haircut tattoo just a little bit too much for my liking. I would have preferred a nice, contemplative Gregorian chant myself. Again, Mr. Speaker, please accept my sincere congratulations and my best wishes.

I also want to congratulate the Deputy Speaker, the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Last Mountain-Touchwood. I know him as a member who is keenly interested in the parliamentary process and I am also confident that he will do a good job in this Legislative Assembly.

I also want to recognize and congratulate our new Sergeant-at-Arms, Patrick Shaw, on his appointment. And I'm pleased to see the return of the same Table officers as we had last year, Mr. Speaker. Given Saskatchewan history of training Table officers and then to see these Table officers moving on to other jurisdictions, one never knows what one might find at the beginning of the session. But I'm pleased to see that we have stability in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to extend my congratulations to all members and I look forward to working with them. I especially welcome the new members. I'm impressed by their commitment to the legislative process. I was impressed by their contributions that I've seen so far. I've read all of their speeches in the throne speech debate; some were excellent, some were less so.

I was very interested to, as an example, to listen to the remarks by the member for Arm River during the throne speech debate, where he gave us a chronology of the members that had been elected to serve the people in that riding since 1905. I found that very interesting.

And I might say that I was also touched by his kind comments

by the immediate previous member for Arm River, Gerald Muirhead. I know that it's a fact of life that we tend to emulate the media and move as packs; that when someone is down to think negatively of them. So therefore I was touched that he would have some kind words to say about the previous member for Arm River. And I appreciated that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the people of Regina Victoria for their support in the last election. I don't want to get into a detailed description at this point of Regina Victoria. I might say that it's primarily a place of modest homes. It was the first home for many people from Europe who moved to Canada to seek better opportunities, and hence parts of Regina Victoria was graced in the past with names such as German Town; names such as Garlic Flats. Those are names that are politically incorrect now, but those were the names that reflected, in those days, the part of town that I represent.

This is a part of Regina that has modest homes, but I might say, these are people with immodest hopes and immodest dreams. These are people that have worked hard to create opportunities for their children. They value hard work. They also value education. And it's a privilege to represent the people of Regina Victoria, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a world of change. Now it may be trite to say that because it's been said so many times. But nevertheless it's true that we live in a world of change, and it's change that impacts heavily on Saskatchewan.

(1115)

Saskatchewan is not an island, but Saskatchewan especially is very dependent on the world outside. Saskatchewan is almost totally dependent on trade. Saskatchewan produces farm produce by some of the most efficient farmers, if not the most efficient farmers, in the world. We export minerals. We also export much of what is manufactured in Saskatchewan. This is not a consumer economy; this is an export economy. And as such, when changes sweep the world, these changes impact Saskatchewan much more so than it might other jurisdictions. Other jurisdictions might be able to shield their people more effectively against change than we are able to do.

Now change also creates opportunities, Mr. Speaker. I met with a friend of mine a few weeks ago who does a fair amount of work with agricultural organizations in exploring future trends, and he was telling me that in the last 10 years, as an example, the world has seen the introduction of 400 million new television sets. And one might ask, well what impact could that possibly have on Saskatchewan, except that these television sets also provide programing to many parts of the world which is North American programing.

So we see the evolution of what some would call American cultural imperialism. We also see a strong trend towards the world accepting North American consumer trends, and therefore we see in isolated villages children wearing "No Fear" T-shirts, or wanting "No Fear" T-shirts, wearing the Nike shoes.

We also see, interestingly enough for Saskatchewan, much more of an interest in beef products because they want McDonald's hamburgers. We also see much more of an up-take in grain products. Sri Lanka is an example where the middle-class is growing, and there is economic growth to 6 per cent a year. I know that the flour mill which has served that country over the years has now reached capacity, and the country needs a new flour mill. Why? Because of changes in consumer trends in that country. And that has a major impact on exporting provinces like Saskatchewan. So in that sense, change is positive for us.

Also see change . . . I read the other day that satellite technology has been evolved to the point where farmers can now use satellite technology to enable them to do something called precision farming. That is to say, they will be able to use the right amount of fertilizer in the right spot using satellite technology.

The next thing you'll know, they'll be able to use global positioning to drive their tractors while they sit in the house and operate the tractor with a computer by remote control. I suspect that too will have some major bearing on farm size and structure of Saskatchewan.

But nevertheless, change is around us. Change affects us. Change is fast paced. And change can also be very unsettling, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Saskatchewan. It can also be very positive.

For example, during the election campaign I was interested to meet a woman on the doorstep who had a patch over her eye, and I asked her what had happened. This is an elderly woman. She said, well I just had cataract surgery. And I said, well were you in the hospital long? She said, no. I went this morning.

This morning! Yes, she said. I went this morning, and it's much different than when I was a nurse and you had to go to the hospital when you had cataract surgery and you had to be immobilized in a hospital bed for a week — immobilized for a week so that the surgery had a change of being successful. Now cataract surgery can be done on an out-patient basis.

This is tremendous news and this is good news if you're having cataract surgery. But it's unsettling for people that work in the institutions in Saskatchewan. It's unsettling for those who work in the health care sector because that kind of technological change and that kind of change in medical technology then also implies other changes in the institutions. So therefore change can be good but change can also be very unsettling.

As we move forward into the 21st century, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that we deal appropriately with change; that we set to rest concerns and anxieties about change and how it will affect us. Mr. Speaker, that is why I'm pleased to support the budget, because the budget provides stability for today and I see that it provides hope for a better century ahead, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about stability . . .

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I hesitate to interrupt the member from Regina Victoria. I would, however, seek leave to introduce guests.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you. On behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to extend a sincere welcome to our guests from China, and I hope that your visits and your meetings prove to be very productive.

Leave granted.

Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I'm pleased to introduce to the legislature, to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the legislature, some distinguished visitors from China.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

I have not had the opportunity to meet these people before and I'm relying on some notes, so to the extent that this information may be in error, I apologize.

We have visiting with us, and I'm going here from right to left, I think, Dr. Hsieh, who I think is well known to many people at the University of Regina. With him is Xiang Naiming, who is vice-president and associate professor of the Kunming University of Science and Technology. With him as well is Huang Qingmei, who is vice-president and professor of the Southern Institute of Metallurgy.

And with him as well is Dr. Sun Zongqi, who is with the China National Non-Ferrous Metals Industrial Corporation. Also, I'm told is, Chen Dake, who is with the Guilin College of Engineering. It is part of an education delegation who are here to develop a training program through the University of Regina.

I am told that Dr. Sun is the head of the education bureau; there are 10 universities and colleges. I found when I was in China that the statistics are quite impressive for someone who lives in a province with a population of only a million people.

The metallurgy industry that we . . . the industry in that part of China has 1.2 million employees and there are 1,700 mines, and this is only a part of China. They've come to Regina. One of the things I discovered when I was in China was that there's a lot of interest in partnering with Saskatchewan in developing educational programs. And I think the University of Regina, Dr. Hsieh will confirm this, is equally interested. They have much to teach us; we have something we might teach them.

So I welcome our distinguished visitors here and ask them to rise.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And would hope that they would . . . they'll find their visit useful. I'm going to try this in Mandarin; we'll see how it goes: bukiqi. There, I think I got it. Good.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Krawetz: — With leave, to introduce guests as well.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE) (continued)

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I support the budget because the budget provides two important considerations for Saskatchewan people. The first is stability; secondly is hope.

This budget again is a surplus budget; there is no deficit. That is a sign of stability. That gives people some hope that there will be stability in the future; that there will be continued stability in the province's finances. To have two surplus budgets in a row is no small feat in Saskatchewan, given our recent history. So I think that's a strong sign of stability in our finances.

Also there are no tax increases. That too is a sign of stability. In fact we are continuing with tax decreases which were announced previously. Those too are important signs of stability.

We have also continued funding this year, Mr. Speaker, for the vital programs offered by the province in the areas of health, education, and social services, notwithstanding federal cuts in transfer payments in the magnitude of approximately \$100 million. The province will continue to provide funding for those areas now that the federal government has made it clear that it wants to reduce funding for education, health, and social services, and it's in that area that the federal government has cut, and cut massively, in its budget. That created massive uncertainty for the people of Saskatchewan.

Nevertheless, the provincial government has seen fit to back-fill, or to ensure that funding is provided for those important programs in Saskatchewan, notwithstanding the actions of the federal government. So again that is evidence of stability, which is much needed in Saskatchewan.

Stability is needed by Saskatchewan people so they can make their own decisions about their own future. And they need to have stability because if there is no stability it becomes difficult for people to plan for their futures. It's hard for them to make personal decisions about where they should go. If they don't know what the tax load is going to be in the future, how can they make decisions about spending money, as an example. This budget provides an important element of stability.

It also provides a very important element of stability for the business sector in Saskatchewan. The business sector cannot operate effectively if a government is lurching one way one day, lurching the other way the next day; one day running deficits, the next day running deficits. That then provides uncertainty about what the government may have to do in the future in order to correct those deficits.

And I want to, and I'm not often inclined, to quote the former premier of Saskatchewan, Grant Devine. But it was Grant Devine who at one time in a gem of wisdom, offered us the following. And he said that you know when you run deficits, it's . . . what you're doing is that you're deferring taxes. I think this is before he was elected, Mr. Speaker. He said that if you run deficits, you're in a sense deferring taxes.

Well we ran deficits for a number of years; we were deferring taxes. This creates great uncertainty on the part of business people about what their future holds in this jurisdiction. How can you make a business plan? How can you look to the future as to what your costs will be, at least in the area of taxes, if there is this uncertainty hanging over you.

And so in this sense again this budget affirms stability in Saskatchewan. I think that's good for the business sector. This allows the business sector to be able to make informed choices about the future and what the future holds in Saskatchewan.

I think it's also an important signal to the financial community and we should not underestimate this, given Saskatchewan's credit rating as it has evolved over the years. I think that we need at all times to assure the financial community, those who make decisions about borrowing and loans to the province, that in fact we have a stable administration, we have a stable fiscal policy. That this is a good place for lenders to loan their money and that we are worthy of solid credit ratings — perhaps an increase or an upgrade in our credit ratings — and therefore a decrease in our interest payments.

So from that point of view — the budget — I support it. It provides important elements of stability — stability that is much needed in Saskatchewan given very recent tumultuous times in our province.

The budget also provides hope. The budget, importantly, sets the stage for continued reduction in Saskatchewan's debt. It proposes that, as opposed to a \$14.9 billion debt in 1994, this debt will be reduced by the year 2000 to \$12.5 billion and that's a . . . as opposed to being 68.3 per cent of the gross domestic product, which is a reflection of our ability to repay debt of 68.3, it's a reduction to 44.3 by the year 2000. Or to put it in terms that the public might easier understand, as opposed to being \$14,700 per capita it will be reduced to \$12,200 per capita.

(1130)

It's the debt that is one of the great destabilizing factors that Saskatchewan has to contend with. We saw a tremendous acceleration of the debt that the taxpayers must support during the 1980s, and as the debt increased, our interest payments that

we need to make on that debt increased tremendously, and so that any solid plan to reduce the debt and thereby also to reduce the interest payments that are expected of Saskatchewan people is a sign of hope for the future — hope that fewer of their tax dollars are going out of Saskatchewan, hope that more of their tax dollars will be staying here in Saskatchewan, and hope that their children will not have to bear the full, crushing burden of the debt load that we inherited in 1991, Mr. Speaker.

There's also hope in this budget when I look at the targeted initiatives to encourage business expansion. This provides hope that the economy in Saskatchewan will continue to grow. The Minister of Finance earlier today related figures by Nesbitt Burns which indicated that the Saskatchewan economy is projected in 1996 to grow strongly. I think there are many other factors that one can point to, especially in the area of the wheat economy, which will suggest that the economy will prove to be strong in 1996 and into the future.

But there are also targeted initiatives in the budget which I think will further encourage business expansion in Saskatchewan. For example, I'm pleased to see that there is a \$7 million capital investment for Innovation Place in Saskatoon to encourage agriculture biotech research. I think that the \$7 million capital investment will initially create or help to create 125 high-tech jobs and hopefully many more spin-off jobs down the road.

But this is a sure sign and a certain sign by the provincial government that it wants to invest in the future and a future that provides a greater variety of opportunities for young people in the job market.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this \$7 million commitment for Saskatoon is good for Saskatoon and it's good for the province. And I don't mind saying that I hope equally that at some future time it will be appropriate for the provincial government to invest in high-tech developments in Regina, especially in the area of information technology, and that that too might help to create more job opportunities in high-tech sectors for Saskatchewan young people. That, I think, would be a prudent investment and good for Regina, but also good for all of Saskatchewan.

So in this case, this is an investment that's good for Saskatoon and good for all of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are those that are given to boasting about their home towns and that's the point of view that they always put forward, that they're given to braggadocio. Personally, I find that kind of boasting rather immature and I'm not given to that myself. And I believe in this case, that this investment for Saskatoon is a good investment for all of Saskatchewan.

I'm also pleased to see, Mr. Speaker, that there is a commitment by the government to provide, I think, \$238 million, almost a quarter of a billion dollars, over the next four years to diversify and strengthen agriculture in a number of important areas. This is what we need to do to give Saskatchewan producers the help they need to be able to make informed choices about their

decisions and their investments in agriculture and to provide for a more productive farm economy.

Some of the other particular details — there's a continuation in the reduction to the corporate income tax on manufacturing and processing, Mr. Speaker, on profits in that area, from 17 per cent to as low as 10 per cent, and again, dependent on the business activity and new jobs being located in Saskatchewan.

There's also a continuation of the reduction in the aviation fuel tax which resulted last year in an 80 per cent increase in business for Saskatchewan-based fuel dealers this year . . . or last year, as well as creation of new jobs.

There's also beginning this year . . . or next year on January 1, 1997 improved tax treatment for Saskatchewan-based inter-jurisdictional truckers by ensuring that all inter-jurisdictional truckers follow the same tax rules. And this should stimulate repairs and equipment sales within the province and again lead to more jobs.

So in that sense I see the budget being a hopeful document; one that will encourage job growth, provides hope for our young people that there will in fact be jobs in Saskatchewan when they graduate from the institutes and universities they attend.

There's also, in another area, I think, hope for Saskatchewan people in the area of social programs. By managing prudently to ensure the continuation of vital government programs in health care, education, social services, we give people hope, Mr. Speaker, hope that — for example, in the area of health care — we will continue to be there or that health care will continue to be there when Saskatchewan people need health care; that they know that health care will continue in the future to be a right for them as opposed to simply being a privilege, as some provinces are indicating they want health care to be; that there is some hope in the future that health care will continue to be universal, that it will be accessible, and that it will be publicly funded.

So in those two important areas, Mr. Speaker, I support the budget because, on the one hand, it provides important stability after a decade of instability created by rather inconsistent and harmful fiscal policies. And it also provides hope for the future as we move forward into the 21st century, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a few moments to also review what the other parties in Saskatchewan have to say about fiscal policy. I think our track record is clear over these last few years as to how we propose to govern the public's finances. But I think we also need to look at what the opposition might have to say, what their approach might be to public finances, what their concept of fiscal policy might be, what their stand is on the major financial issues of the day.

Now it's hard to tell from their speeches. It's not the nature of the opposition to propose solutions; it's the nature of the opposition to oppose what it is that the government is doing and to find fault with anything and everything that the government is doing. So it's hard to tell from their speeches.

Now if you were to take their speeches and look at them and what they say, you would see that the opposition stand for lower taxes, higher spending; at least they've given us evidence of that. They want higher spending on highways. They want more spending in the area of crop insurance because they want offices maintained where they're not needed. They wanted more spending in the areas of GRIP. Every day they remind us. They want more spending in certain areas of health care to keep institutions such as the Plains open. They also stand of course for surplus budgets. It would be wrong of any opposition party now to say that they support deficits, even though the Conservatives did support that approach. And of course they stand for massive debt reduction. In other words, Mr. Speaker, they have no coherent policy. They are a mass of contradictions in terms of what they say.

But surely there must be something, there must be something, Mr. Speaker, that sets them apart from the government or, for that matter, that sets them apart from each other. There must be some coherent approach in the things that they say. There must be some congruent philosophy that comes out of the statements that they make, out of the speeches that they've made in this House.

And I say yes, there is something. If you listen very, very carefully to the speeches made by the members opposite, if you read very carefully the speeches that they've made, if you read very carefully the campaign platforms that they campaigned on in the last election, the odd hint does get out. It's like Leonard Cohen once said in a song. He said something like, there's a crack in everything; that's how the light gets in.

So if you look hard enough, there is a crack, Mr. Speaker, the light does get in, and we are able to see what it is that they stand for in the areas of governing or administering the public's finances.

First let me deal with the Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker. The Conservative Party has a strong tradition in Saskatchewan of governing in the recent past. This is a party, under the former premier of Grant Devine, that gave new meaning to the word spendthrift. This was a government that was characterized by extravagance and wasteful spending, and also characterized by some other questionable activities, but I won't get into that, Mr. Speaker. I'm very mindful of the *sub judice* conventions that are found in the rules of order and that govern our speeches here in the House. So I don't want to get into that part of it.

But it is fair to say that the PCs (Progressive Conservative) financially — financially — in the areas of fiscal policy were a government that started badly and went downhill thereafter. This is a government that started with the philosophy as expounded by that financial wizard from Kindersley, one Bob Andrew, who read a book on stimulative deficits and decided that this was the course for Saskatchewan to go. And in his very first budget offered Saskatchewan a deficit and successive Finance ministers under the Tories kept it going ever since.

They started us on a track to successive deficits and annual borrowing to make ends meet. It was a bizarre record of profligacy unmatched anywhere in Canada and perhaps in the

Commonwealth. I've yet to hear of the horror stories inflicted on Saskatchewan from anywhere else in the Commonwealth, Mr. Speaker. I think the *Globe and Mail* had it right when they commented on the Conservative government of Grant Devine and said something to the effect that they were arguably, arguably the worst government ever seen in Canada.

This is a record so unlike that of Douglas, Lloyd, Thatcher — even Thatcher, yes Thatcher — and Blakeney, all premiers who believed in a fiscal policy that was sustainable and in managing the public's finances in a way that meant that you didn't borrow to make ends meet, that you provided important elements of stability. And Ross Thatcher, like the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and the NDP premiers, believed in balanced budgets. And in that sense, he had a very good record for Saskatchewan, unlike the PCs. But this is the track record of the PCs opposite we're dealing with, a record I don't think that Saskatchewan people will ever forget and a record I think that we should make sure that they must never forget, Mr. Speaker.

Now the inheritors, the inheritors of that record, the current PC caucus or, as I know them, the triple R party, the triple R party, Mr. Speaker. . .

An Hon. Member: — What's that?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Rural right-wing rump party, Mr. Speaker, the inheritors of the Devine record. And it's amazing that they're still around. I give them credit for that.

This current PC caucus has done everything that it can within its power in the last number of years to try and dissociate themselves from the Devine record. Wasn't it just this last year also that they held a provincial convention to see if they should dissociate themselves from the federal PCs, to dissociate themselves from the record of Brian Mulroney, and I guess from the record of John Diefenbaker and others?

But this is of course hard to do. Four out of the five, I must remind the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, ran in 1991 on the Devine PC record. They ran on the Devine PC platform. And they can say all they want about, well we weren't there; we didn't make those decisions; we were new. They ran on that record in 1991 in strong support, proudly in support, of Grant Devine. But they're trying very hard to change, to reform themselves if you like, trying very hard to reform themselves.

And it's instructive how they do that, Mr. Speaker. One, I see that they focus attention on a few highly emotive issues, issues that have very little in the way of financial consequences but push the right emotional buttons — issues like taxation for status Indians, issues such as welfare abuse, and lately, issues such as MLA pay and pensions. I can't think of three issues that have stronger emotional content. But when you examine them, financially speaking, they are not as significant as many other issues, but those issues seem to be irrelevant for the PCs, Mr. Speaker. What they do is they pick targets that create emotional reactions and in this way try to form an association between themselves and fiscal prudence.

I was also amused, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday we saw a new

tact by the PC Party where the leader of the PC Party, the member for Kindersley, tried to . . . well he didn't try, gave some faint praise for the budget in his comments in his immediate post-budget reaction. He gave the Finance minister and gave the NDP government some faint praise of what we had done in the budget. And I think that this might be a new tact on their part that if they say good things about our government, which has a very good track record in financial matters, that by associating themselves with us, that some of it might rub off on them and therefore seem as credible in the financial sense.

(1145)

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, they have worked hard, and I say with some success. That's why they still have five members in this House, and they're not totally gone to oblivion. I think it's a credit to their political ingenuity. And perhaps . . . I know that there is some discussion about the Leader of the Third Party, the PC Party, about just what kind of academic background he did have. Some said it was in welding. Was it perhaps in social engineering or political engineering, Mr. Speaker, that has led them to this state where they still have five members in the House? But they will never rid themselves of the legacy of the Devine administration, Mr. Speaker, and that disastrous time in our history.

Now one of the reasons that they will never be able to rid themselves of that legacy is their approach of picking on the weak. Are there any weaker groups in Saskatchewan society than first nations people? Are there any weaker groups in Saskatchewan society but those that have to depend on welfare? Are there weaker groups that you can name? But these are the targets by the Tories; these are the targets.

And in that way, they follow exactly the same approach followed by Grant Devine which was the approach of divide and conquer, that you find certain targets, that you pick on them hoping that by picking on those targets that you can get the mass of people behind you on strong emotional issues. This was an approach of divide and conquer and ultimately, ultimately led to the demise of the Devine government.

But the present PC caucus, in following in the footsteps in Devine, in those kinds of tactics, I think will serve to remind people of the Devine administration. So it's obvious that over time that the PC caucus has to find another approach if they ever want to be again relevant to the people of Saskatchewan. It's not enough to pick on the poor and to pick on the weak and hope that somehow that will catapult you to strong support on the part of the majority of the people.

To get the support of the majority of the people, you need to form bridges between groups in society. You need to form bridges between people in society if you want the majority of the people to support you. You can't follow the approach that they're following now and which reminds us of the Devine administration.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that they will not be able to rid themselves of the Devine monkey on their backs is

that every so once in awhile they slip up. They just slip up, notwithstanding their best effort and all of their discipline to say things in a way that will never, never, never again remind us of the profligacy of the Devine administration. Every once in awhile they slip up. They let loose with something, a little gem that just serves to remind us of where they've come from.

Now a prime example of that is the member for Moosomin, Mr. Speaker, who, when the issue of Cameco shares was first raised in the public and there was some discussion about the government selling off Cameco shares and what should be done with the proceeds of those shares, the member for Moosomin took the approach that you should sell a few shares every year to make ends meet.

But if you sell a few shares this year, then you could use the proceeds from that to maintain your current levels of spending, and that next year you would do the same thing again, and so on and so on. In fact he said, and I quote from the *Leader-Post*; he said . . . and this is the member for Moosomin He said, quote:

Toth said, the government would only have to sell one-tenth of its Cameco shares to make up the \$100 million shortfall in federal transfer payments.

Well now, Mr. Speaker, this is we know of course very, very, very incorrect thinking in the current fiscal climate. This is simply not the way to go. And I think the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* said it best a few days later when they said that using the proceeds of a sale of assets to maintain day-to-day spending would work for a year or two but cannot be sustained.

And this is why the government has proposed — and that is why other spokespersons in the oppositions have taken the approach — that if you're going to sell off assets, those assets should be used to lower your debt. And as you lower your debt, then you lower your interest payments forever. And that this is a far more sustainable option for the disposition of assets and the proceeds that come from the disposition of those assets.

But there you had it. You had a little slip-up by the member for Moosomin who served to remind us of the philosophy that governed the Devine administration, and that is that if you've got a problem today, just borrow the money and make ends meet the best you can. Worry about tomorrow some other day. These are not people that were particularly future oriented. And I think that it's to their credit that a few days later the member from Moosomin was completely contradicted by his own leader, the Leader of the Third Party who said oh no, no, no, no. For sure, any proceeds from the disposition of those assets must go to debt reduction, and clearly contradicting his member.

They must look upon him — and remembering that the member from Moosomin was elected in 1986 and actually served in the Devine administration — he must look upon him as a bit of an odd relative or something like that, somebody that you shuffle off to the side and you don't haul out when there's important financial issues that have to be dealt with. He's a bit embarrassing that way for them, Mr. Speaker.

But it's just not the member from Moosomin himself that has slipped up. The PC leader himself slipped up one day in the heat of a moment in debate here in the legislature. And it just came out. He blurted it out, a little *faux pas*, a very telling comment, and I refer members to March 4, *Hansard* or his comments on March 4 when the Leader of the Opposition was responding to the Speech from the Throne and he said on page 51 . . . he was talking about the Premier's efforts in 1991, following the provincial election, to obtain federal support for agriculture in Saskatchewan.

And if members will remember, those are years when there was still a great deal of uncertainty in the agricultural sector. Many farmers were facing crushing debt loads which were impacting on their farm operations. There was grave concern about the future of agriculture in Saskatchewan, and the Premier undertook to go to Ottawa to put the case for Saskatchewan farmers and to remind the government of the day that agriculture is a very important industry in terms of export earnings for all of Canada and therefore deserved federal support, and it shouldn't simply be left to the provinces. So the Premier went to Ottawa with a number of producers and representative agricultural groups to press the point with the federal government.

And the Leader of the Opposition talked about this . . . or not the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader the Third Party, the leader of the PC Party, my apologies to the official opposition for that little slip-up. But he talked about the Premier's efforts to obtain federal support for agriculture.

And he said:

Well I recall after the election in 1991, the Premier loaded up a plane of people, said he was going to go down to Ottawa and he was going to grab some money away from them and bring it back and distribute it to farmers.

Now this is putting it in his own words about the Premier's effort to press the point about the need for federal involvement in agricultural support. He puts it in his own words that the Premier was going to go and get money for the farmers.

Then he goes on to say: "And what did we get?" What did we get? He said, we. "We didn't get one dime from you people . . ." We. We didn't get one dime. We? Who's we? The members of the PC caucus, that they didn't get a dime to put in their pockets? Is this not the classic Conservative problem of inability to distinguish, inability to distinguish between public finance and your personal pocketbook? This is the problem that was being expounded by the member for Kindersley, the Leader of the Third Party: an inability to differentiate between the public's business and the public purse and personal pursuits and the personal pocketbooks.

We, we — not the farmers of Saskatchewan, not the people of Saskatchewan but "we didn't get one dime". We didn't get one dime. Like some lobby group on the floor of the legislature, well we didn't get anything. An inability to distinguish between the public purse, between public policy and private pursuits — the classic Tory problem.

And it slipped out that day, Mr. Speaker, and it'll slip out again because they might change their spots, but we still know them for what they are, Mr. Speaker. And you'll see it again. It'll be kind of like this comet, Hyakutake's comet. You know, a little faint and you're not quite clear what it is. But when you see it, you know it for what it is. That's what it is, Mr. Speaker. That's the real PC disease: the inability to distinguish.

These are also the people that said at one time that deficits are good. Deficits are good as long as you put money in your own pocket. These are the people that now say deficits are bad if I have to pay for the deficits that were incurred to put money in my pocket. And these are the people that say government spending is good if I get benefit from the government spending. But government spending is now bad if I have to pay for the government spending that benefit me in the first place. That's the real PC disease: an ingrained selfishness, an inability to consider the public good, Mr. Speaker.

No, I don't think we're going to see the PCs again in my lifetime as a real significant force in Saskatchewan. These are not people that have the ability to appeal to all of the people of Saskatchewan. This is a rump party, and they're destined to stay as that for some time to come, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just say a few words about the approach of the official opposition and their approach to public finance, to fiscal policy. And I might say that this is a group that's somewhat more difficult to figure out. This is not a group that has a track record in recent years. I did mention earlier the Thatcher years and the fiscal policy of premier Thatcher in the '60s. But since that time, we have not seen any significant Liberal force in Saskatchewan, and so it's difficult to figure out just where they stand.

Now the only real document we have that might help us discern what it is that their position is on the significant public . . . the management of the public's finances is their campaign document from the last election, something called *Restoring Health to Saskatchewan*, the Saskatchewan Liberal action plan for lower taxes, better health care, more jobs, smaller government. This is the only real evidence we have of what their approach is to public financing. And I tell you the centrepiece of this document is a proposal by them to lower the sales tax from 9 per cent, 9 per cent which it is currently, to 5 per cent. And they say that you could handle this because lowering the sales tax in that way would create such an economic boom in Saskatchewan of 8 per cent economic growth every year, that the economic growth would provide such revenues so as to make up for the revenues that you lose by cutting the sales tax. Now that was their approach.

It is an understatement to say that this proposal by theirs raised some eyebrows, an understatement. It is more appropriate to say that this is a proposal that was laughed at by anybody that ever had any common sense and any knowledge of economics, with the exception of the techno-weenies and the propeller heads that they had to help them write this in the first . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker. But the rest of anybody that was reputable laughed at it. This was economic hocus-pocus. It was unworkable. This was a non-starter. This was DOA, dead on

arrival, as soon as it came out, very dead on arrival. But that's what we have in trying to discern their plan or at least their approach to public finance.

But is it yours? I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, whose plan this is because this is the plan that came forward under their leader who is now the independent Liberal member for Saskatoon Greystone who was then the Liberal leader. And throughout the document, this campaign platform, it mentions her. And they use the words, her name and Liberal interchangeably.

So I'm not sure whose document this is. Is it her platform? Or is this the platform of the official opposition? I don't know. Put up your hands. Whose is it? Who wants to claim ownership of this document? Who wants it? Whose is this? Is this the platform of the member for Saskatoon Greystone? Or is this the official platform of the members of the official opposition? Somebody put up your hands and let us know who owns this.

Mr. Speaker, no one's putting up their hands. No one's claiming any ownership of that document and for very good reason, Mr. Speaker.

(1200)

Mr. Speaker, since the election there has been very little to indicate the overall approach of the official opposition to questions of fiscal policy. There was a little glimmer of something one day when the member for Thunder Creek — who I understand is their finance spokesperson and was the person who responded to the Speech from the Throne — there was a little glimmer of something one day when there was an article in the *Leader-Post* on WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) rates to rise. And business, opposition parties crying foul. There was criticism of a proposal by the Workers' Compensation Board to increase rates. And it was very instructive to read the comments by the member for Thunder Creek at that point, who said . . .

An Hon. Member: — What did he say?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well the member from Thunder Creek said, and I quote from the article:

Liberal Gerard Aldridge said no increase should be permitted as long as there is a surplus in the WCB's injury fund.

So he's saying that as long as there is a surplus in things, you should never increase rates. As long as there's a surplus, you should never restructure to ensure future sustainability. So it's kind of like the old Tory approach that if you've got it, spend it. And then when you don't got it, you borrow it. And when you can't borrow it, you sell off what you've got.

Now I saw in that article, I saw in that article, Mr. Speaker, just a glimmer, a glimmer of similarities between the official opposition and the old Tory approach. If you've got it, spend it, and if you don't have it, borrow it. Don't try and restructure. Don't try and restructure it to ensure future sustainability. Don't try and restructure to ensure stability and to ensure hope. No,

you just spend what you've got, Mr. Speaker, so kind of like the PCs in that way.

And that was the first glimmer that we had of some congruent, coherent fiscal policy on their part. Other than that, it's just simply to criticize the government. But in this way, he was being proactive. He said: no, I'm not just going to criticize you for what you're doing; this is what you should do. Well if that's the approach, then, boy, I think Saskatchewan people had better watch out because it's more of the same old thing that they had under the Devine PCs.

But it's hard to figure out what they stand for, Mr. Speaker. But I do know that they display a tendency for creative figuring. And there's some examples of that. A very recent instance was the issue of Crown tendering where there was in a fact even a motion before the House which said in part that the Assembly demand the government repeal the unfair Crown Construction Tendering Agreement which has, since its implementation, cost the taxpayers of this province \$118 million last year alone.

But the figures that we've got from the Crown Investments Corporation said that in the period of March until November, '95 — and the Crown Tendering Agreement came into place in March of '95 — from March of '95 until November of '95, there were 47 projects tendered and awarded under the terms of this Crown corporation tendering agreement which states that costs taxpayers \$118 million.

But the total value of those contracts was \$15 million. So I'm still trying to figure on how \$15 million of contract, you could have overruns of \$118 million. I just don't understand, and I would commend to the members a sharp pencil, a reliable calculator, and some good, old fashioned homework to understand the finances of the province.

Another example — no, I better not get into this — is the insistence by the member for Thunder Creek that federal offloading, the cuts in federal transfers, are really not what they seem. He says it's not \$100 million. It's much less than that because you've got tax points, tax points that were implemented, I think, almost 20 years ago now.

What the federal government of the day said, look, we're going to not only transfer you money to support health, post-secondary education and social services; we're also going to lower our taxes by thirteen and a half per cent so that you can increase your taxes by thirteen and a half per cent. So therefore you also get revenue in that way. And that's what happened. They'd lower their taxes, but only one little problem is that since that time the federal government has more than made up for that cut in taxes. So what the member is saying, is that well, it's really not that bad. It's not really \$100-plus million in cuts in transfer payments you're experiencing here; it's only \$40 million and you could increase taxes to realize the rest.

That's what he's saying. But these are the same people that say we should be reducing taxes. So it's a bit unclear just where they stand. As it was yesterday, as it was yesterday in his opening comments and his response to the budget speech, the member for Thunder Creek, who is the official spokesperson

for financial matters for that party and therefore he must put some weight in his words and that when he says something we must assume, reasonably so, that this represents the position of the official opposition.

Where he berated, berated — went up one side of the government and down the other side of the government — for its job creation record and said this is the worst job creation record in all of Canada. This is terrible; this is bad; this is wrong; you've got to do better; we don't see anything like this in the rest of Canada. He just took a strip off us for our job creation record.

It was a scathing attack, a scathing attack. That's what he said. He said, at one point, we had the worst job creation record in Canada. This is questionable, by the way, because Saskatchewan also has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, but nevertheless we won't get into that.

But on the other hand, shortly thereafter, shortly thereafter he berated the government for what he called a tax increase. He said, there is in fact a \$100 million tax increase in this budget. And what he's done is that he pointed out that tax revenues this year will be \$100 million higher than they were last year. Not because tax rates have gone up — in fact some tax rates have gone down — not because tax rates have gone up, but because tax revenues reflect the economy of the province. So that as the economy improves and more people work, more people pay taxes to the government.

Even though the rates don't change, the amount of tax revenue will increase. As the economy improves, more people will go out and spend what it is that they earn. Therefore you will see increases in consumer purchases; therefore you will see increases in sales tax revenue for the government.

He calls that a tax increase, but it's not a tax increase. In fact what it is is solid evidence of an economy that is strong, an economy that is working, and a total contradiction of what he said only moments before about an economy that isn't working, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — This is an official opposition party that contradicts itself, that has a propensity for creative figuring, Mr. Speaker. Only time will tell just how well they will do and whether they're able to make, launch, some coherent criticism of the government on its policy.

Mr. Speaker, before I want to sit down, I want to offer them an opportunity. I want to offer the official opposition an opportunity to do that — to come forward. And now this is no revival meeting, but I want them to . . . to give them an opportunity to come forward and to, on a very critical matter — a very critical matter of public finance, a very critical matter of public finance — to state clearly, succinctly, without question, where it is that they stand.

And the question I refer to is the GST, the goods and services tax. This is an issue that still hangs over us like some cloud.

This is an issue that is unresolved in Canada and an issue that yet may impact Saskatchewan. It is like some cloud that hangs over us and creates much uncertainty. It would be helpful if all of the members of the House could agree as to how Saskatchewan should deal with this critical question of the goods and services tax, the GST.

Why is this an issue? Well it kind of dates back to the last federal election, Mr. Speaker, when the federal Liberals in the run up to the election campaign . . .

An Hon. Member: — What did they say?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well the federal Liberals promised that they were going to abolish — they were going to abolish — the GST. In fact Sheila Copps, a Liberal candidate . . . Sheila Copps I think is a person who is well known to members of the Assembly and those in the listening public, who is now the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada and a Liberal candidate in 1993. She said, I've already said personally and very directly that if the GST is not abolished — abolished — I'll resign.

I don't know how clear you can get. I think you've got to be accountable on the things that you say you're going to do and you have to deliver on them. She said she was going to abolish.

Now also in 1993 another Liberal candidate by the name of Jean Chrétien said, we will scrap — scrap — the GST. Okay.

Now abolish means to put an end to the existence or practice of something. Scrap means discard as useless. Very clear. Very clear. Abolish, scrap, get rid of, never see it again, demise, gone to meet its maker, for ever, no longer an imposition on the people of Canada. That's what they said.

But then I guess in the propeller heads that made up the federal red policy . . . or the federal red book, they said, a Liberal government will replace the GST; not scrap, not abolish, but replace, which means to take the place of, succeed, to be substituted for, be succeeded or have one's place filled by another, be superseded. That's what the Liberal policy was in 1993.

But now of course, now of course, the Liberals are saying something else, because they realize the full import of what it would be to abolish, scrap the GST, or for that matter, to even try and replace the GST. They don't know what to do. They're panicking. This is a very firm campaign commitment on their behalf.

So now they're saying not that they're going to abolish or scrap or even replace; now they're saying, what we really meant to say all along is that our promise was to harmonize the GST with the provincial sales tax — to harmonize. Harmonize means to bring into or be in harmony; make or form a pleasing or consistent whole. That's what their platform is now apparently.

And how glibly it just slides off the tongue of the federal Finance minister. Oh yes, we want to harmonize our GST. That's a real issue that we have in Canada. We want to harmonize the GST with the provincial sales tax. And if only

these provinces get on board like the way they should, because this has been our promise all along, to harmonize. How glibly it flies off his tongue. Forget about scrap, abolish, or even replace, now the issue seems to be harmonize.

Well the bottom line — and I don't want to get into this in great detail because I'm hoping that the official opposition will pick us up on this opportunity to put squarely before the people of Saskatchewan their position on this important matter by perhaps bringing a motion to this House as to where they stand — there is major differences between the provincial sales tax as we know it and the GST.

The GST is of course a much broader base. It means that as opposed to the current situation where people don't pay the sales tax on restaurant meals, under the GST, they would pay the GST on restaurant meals, any number of services; that if you have a carpenter to come into the house to install some new kitchen cupboards, at this point the carpenter doesn't charge you any provincial sales on his services, but under the GST, he's obliged to also tax you for the services that he provides.

Now the other major difference is that business inputs are recognized under the GST and this would . . . if we recognize all business inputs in Saskatchewan it would mean that we would lose probably about one-half of our current provincial sales tax revenues.

Mr. Speaker, I see the member for Arm River is on his feet and I think he wants to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McLane: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

(1215)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In listening to yesterday's budget and today's budget reply and support in favour, I've heard the federal government's name mentioned quite a bit and I just thought it would be interesting that a federal member come to visit us today and partake in listening to some of the logic. And I'd, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Assembly, I'd like to introduce the member for Souris-Moose Mountain, Mr. Bernie Collins, and I'd ask you to welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

(continued)

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I want to extend this

opportunity . . . and I haven't discussed this with my colleagues but I state this with some degree of certainty that I feel I'm comfortable in extending an opportunity to the official opposition to put a motion before the House which clearly and succinctly states their position on the question of harmonization of the PST with the GST. Never mind about abolishing or scrapping it, we know that's kind of gone now, that part of the platform is gone. Just tell us where you stand on that critical issue.

For that matter, it would be very interesting, very interesting to see where the third party, the PCs, stand on this because this was the part in 1991 on which most of the current members ran — on a program to in fact harmonize the GST with the provincial sales tax. But did I get some sense yesterday from the question in question period that the Leader of the Third Party, the member from Kindersley, the PC Leader, is now having some questions about that?

I'm not really clear and I think that it's appropriate that the member for Thunder Creek, as official financial spokesperson, puts a motion before the House to make it clear just where it is that he and his party stand. Do they agree with Sheila Copps of 1993, or do they agree with Sheila Copps of today? Do they agree with Jean Chrétien of 1993? Do they agree with Paul Martin today? Which is it?

We don't know and I think this provides you with an excellent opportunity to make it clear — as opposed to simply criticizing this or criticizing that — to make it clear where you actually stand for something.

Now I want to extend that opportunity to the members and I hope that they'll pick up on that opportunity and in fact let us know where they stand.

Do they agree with the federal members of parliament who are panicking like people caught in a fire, running around and saying, well if it wasn't for the Saskatchewan government we'd be harmonized by now? Well you bet, you bet. You bet it's because of the provincial government we're not harmonized by now, when you look at some of the impacts of harmonizing — that the provincial coffers would lose in excess of \$100 million a year on top of all the other cuts from Ottawa; that we're going to take some further cuts from Ottawa by harmonizing the GST and the impact that it will have on consumers of this province.

I think it was the Finance minister from B.C. (British Columbia) who estimated the impact on the average family would be something like \$400 a year. Now she may be unkind; she's not sort of giving business any credit for any pass-through that there might be, you know, on these business inputs. But even assuming there's a 50 per cent pass-through, it still means something like a \$200 impact on Saskatchewan families every year, you know.

So these are significant financial issues, and I think it's a golden opportunity for the Liberals to make it clear where they stand. Mr. Speaker, we would like to know where they stand on that, and also whether they agree with their Liberal soul brothers in Ottawa and the members of parliament for

Saskatchewan of the Liberal persuasion who are running around saying they favour harmonization. I think this is a critical financial issue, and we deserve to know where they stand.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before sitting down again I want to just say that I support the budget because I think the budget is an important document of stability and hope for the 21st century, and it deserves the support of the members of the House, as it will be supported by the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise in my place in the House and join the debate on the budget speech, particularly after hearing that very eloquent and very coherent and comprehensive exposition of the budget speech by the member from Regina Victoria. Not only did he clearly outline for all the members in this House the thrusts, the aims, the objectives of the 1996-97 budget, he also very clearly pointed out the paradoxes, inconsistencies, and indeed downright incompetence of the members opposite, as they run around trotting out tried and true techniques that — I'm sorry — I don't believe the people of Saskatchewan will be fooled by any longer.

The people of Saskatchewan know that we have a difficult financial situation. They've known this for some time, even before they turfed the Tories out of office. That is indeed the reason the Tories got turfed out of office. The people of Saskatchewan were fed up with the financial flimflam that we saw during the '80s. The people of Saskatchewan demanded that we have fiscal prudence, fiscal responsibility, in this province. At the same time they said let's have compassion. Let's have caring. Let's maintain our social programs. Let's not have the politics of division and derision that seemed to have characterized the debate of the '80s and the early '90s for far too long.

The people of Saskatchewan, I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know very clearly what the problems are that beset this changing society. The people of Saskatchewan are ready to shoulder responsibility and to carry forth, with their heads held high, and to create a better future for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren.

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Jess: — With leave, to ask permission to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce Mr. Joe Holden who is sitting up in the Speaker's gallery. Joe is a political activist and long-time, dedicated cooperator from the north-west part of the province in the district of Marshall, I believe. And I would like to ask all members to join with me in

welcoming Joe to the session.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE) (continued)

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I would like to join with the member from Redberry Lake in also welcoming Mr. Holden to this House.

It is wonderful to see somebody who has dedicated his life to the cooperative movement coming to this legislature at this time. Because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this budget is about — it's about cooperation. It's about cooperation and compassion and community. Those are the themes that the people of Saskatchewan wish their government to take forward into the next century. Those are the themes that the New Democratic Party wishes to take forward into the new century.

And quite frankly, if the members opposite wish to be around for the next century, those are the themes that they better start listening to and acting on. It is no longer the politics of division. I say to the members opposite, it is time they recognized that cooperation is the vehicle that will take us into the 21st century — cooperation, not competition. It is compassion that will take us forward into the 21st century — compassion, not mean-spirited charity. It is community that will take us forward into the 21st century, not rugged individualism.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is time, and this government has heard it very clearly, that all of us in this legislature listen to the people of Saskatchewan and find ways to transform their ideals — their ideals of cooperation, community and compassion — into a workable blueprint that will move us away from blueprint state socialism and from chaotic and anarchic rugged individualism and will move us forward into the 21st century with our heads held high.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday I listened with considerable pride to the Minister of Finance as she presented the budget speech in this House. I listened with pride to know that we have established a record in this Dominion of Canada. We are the first province not only to have balanced our budget in the '90s. We are the first province to have done an encore and to have done it two years in a row.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know as a result of the budget that the Finance minister tabled yesterday that we will have four more years of balanced budget. We will reduce the debt beset upon us by the Tories of the '80s. We will reduce the debt by \$2.4 billion which obviously means the interest payments will be reduced correspondingly. I believe the

estimate is by some \$100 million per year which obviously free up money for important government programs. Our budget also will see no tax increases and will see government expenses cut by some \$230 million just in this next year alone.

Those are the kinds of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I would think all responsible people — all responsible legislators, all responsible opinion-shapers, all responsible interest and advocacy groups — would hear and would take some pride in. Balanced budgets, no tax increase, and a strong social safety net. Those are the kinds of things the people of Saskatchewan are saying they want. Those are the kinds of things that this '96-97 budget speech delivers.

And yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I left the legislature yesterday it was with a heavy heart because I went out into the lobby and I listened to people. I listened to elected members opposite, I listened to the spokespersons for various advocacy groups. And what did I hear? I heard carping and complaining, I heard doom and gloom, but most of all I think I heard greed. It was, not me, don't do it to me; do it to some other group. If you've got to do it, okay, we'll recognize maybe that the province's finances are in tough shape, but don't touch me, touch somebody else.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have been out talking to people in this province and most particularly in my own constituency, I don't believe that those politics of me first, or only me, or greedy me, prevail any longer in this province, if indeed they ever did prevail. I think that the opinion-shapers and the doom-mongers in the seats opposite are drastically out of touch with the reality that is current in the Saskatchewan of today.

(1230)

And I'll tell you why I think that. I received some very compelling proof as I went home to my basement apartment to watch the 6 o'clock news to see what all the wondrous opinion-shapers — the SUMA and the SARM reps, the union reps, the business reps, the student reps, all those people — to see what they were saying about this budget.

When I went home I talked to my god-daughter, who has been staying with me here in Regina this past week. She's 18 years old, and like most 18-year-olds, she's probably more interested in the latest video on MuchMusic than she is in a budget. But what she did was she turned on the television yesterday afternoon and she watched the Finance minister present the budget. This young woman is extremely intelligent, extremely accurate in her observations. But she is not someone who is involved in politics on a day-to-day basis.

Her reaction to the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker? She said to me, you know, it's not too bad. It's actually a good budget. She said: she — referring to the Finance minister — she knows what she's doing. She's cool and she's calm and most of all, she cares. I think it's a really good budget, she said. And I was just blown away to hear that reaction from an 18-year-old after I had just finished ploughing my way through the crowd of doom-sayers out in the rotunda of the Legislative Building.

It was so refreshing to hear somebody cut through all the typical groans that we have come to expect round about budget time and to hear somebody say, hey, it's not too bad. I think the province is in good shape. I congratulate my god-daughter for having that kind of sense to realize that this is a good budget. And I congratulate all people like her. I think that maybe what we need to do in this legislature is perhaps get back to the dreams and ideals of the 18-year-olds and look at things from their points of view rather than looking at things from our oh-so-sophisticated and oh-so-jaded points of view.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, because as many, many members have referred to many times in this House, we are in a time of change right now. We are privileged in Canada to live in what most people in the world would consider to be the lap of luxury. At the same time, we see that there are many, many global changes that could lead to some drastic alterations in terms of that luxury that we have. So people are running around scared, worried about the future, concerned about change, and I understand that. And I can empathize with their motivation, with their need to want to have some security in their lives.

The budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the member from Regina Victoria clearly articulated, is a very strong vehicle for bringing some security into their lives. At the same time, governments cannot nor should they do it all. It is time that all of us collectively rose above the easy, glib objections to everything and understood that there is a totally different reality in this world right now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the year 2000, 400 to 500 million people in east Asia will enjoy a standard of living equal to that enjoyed by the people living in Europe right now. We should all be very pleased about that rather than saying, oh me, oh my, all the jobs are going offshore. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Asia Pacific, not even including China and Japan, will manufacture 29 per cent of the world's output, as much as the European union does now.

Clearly things are changing. Clearly the world's economy is changing, and clearly we recognize here in Saskatchewan that we have to be ready for that change. We have to recognize that new ways, modernized structures, sustainable structures will be the only way that we can go forth boldly into the 21st century and maintain a similar or better standard of living for all people in this province.

That means that what we have to do is change the structures, change the old ways of doing things, and get with it in terms of a modern agenda. I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our government is doing that. We are doing that through a process of involving the community, devolving authority and responsibility to communities, changing the focus away from the state to the community and to families.

We know, as legislators, that we have the responsibility to give people the hope of a better life, but we also know that people in turn have a responsibility to give something back to their community. We intend, Mr. Speaker, with this budget, with the legislative agenda we've outlined, to work towards finding that balance between the state and the community, between rights

and responsibilities. We intend, Mr. Speaker, to bolster the foundations of civil society so that we can achieve some community consensus on moral and social values, so we can emphasize the responsibilities that all of us have for good citizenship and so that we can focus on our strong Saskatchewan communities.

Our modern task which will be made much easier by the measures outlined in this budget is to move the public agenda away from the central level and down to the community level. We cannot do this though, based simply on encouraging people to change their attitudes. We also have to have economic change. That means that we have to have firm and strong measures as we do in this budget to have a stronger economy and to build prosperity and to have jobs for the new century.

Mr. Speaker, it is too easy to get caught up, and all of us tend to do that. It is too easy to get caught up in the day-to-day political crises and titillations and to lose sight of why we're actually doing the job we are doing, which is being a politician.

We have to understand that there are larger issues out there, and we have to see them in the larger context. Times indeed are a changin'. And people are looking for stability and security in those changing times. The security and stability that they are looking for is a strong social safety net and, at the same time, a strong ability for them to seize initiative and to be able to work for themselves and for their families.

We cannot ignore these realities. We do need to focus on what is happening in this society and to make sure that we have built the cornerstones for prosperity and the cornerstones for preserving the quality of life in Canada.

We cannot do this, Mr. Speaker, by doing as the members opposite do: callously appealing to the worst in people. That kind of political skulduggery, I would suggest, is *passé*. It is simply something that people all over the world, but people particularly in Saskatchewan, are not willing to accept any longer.

As the Speaker said this morning in his ruling, it is time that we understand and separate humour from lack of civility. I endorse his ruling this morning. I think that it was a very wise ruling, and I hope that all of us, on all sides of the House, pay heed to it and work to appeal to the best in people rather than the worst in people. We, as politicians, can do better. And we must do better — for ourselves, for our children, and our grandchildren.

We on this side of the House have dedicated ourselves to saying we will do better. I ask the members opposite us to join with us and not simply engage in picayune rhetoric, but rather to help us as we work to restructure the traditional tools that people have looked to for stability and security as we work to modernize them, as we work to ensure that they are sustainable. I ask them to understand that the interests of the community at large are better and more important than individual agendas, no matter how eloquent those individual spokespersons may be.

Mr. Speaker, this budget speech will, as other members have pointed out, will build prosperity and jobs for the new century.

It will preserve the cornerstones of our quality of life. And most importantly, it will restructure and streamline our government so that people then have freedom to choose and have freedom to have some control over their own futures.

We will be able to move from focusing on an economy and a government that merely plays with money to instead having a wealth-producing economy in this province. We will do it by devolving structures to the local community levels, but at the same time devolving authority there as well. We will do it, in essence, by giving up power so that together all of us are more empowered.

There are incredible possibilities within Saskatchewan if we are, all of us, willing to look to the future, willing to give up past habits of simply crying and grovelling for our own individual self-interests, but instead are willing to focus on the larger community interests — the larger interests of a truly strong and vibrant democracy.

I believe that that is what this budget does. It puts those cornerstones in place. And I believe that we can survive, thrive, and prosper in the next century if we, all of us, get on board and work towards that stronger community sense of values in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that the hour is now getting rather late, and so with a great deal of pride I say to you, I support the budget speech. I support the approach that our government is giving towards restructuring our government and our economy, and I do therefore at this time move to adjourn this debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

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