

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of people all throughout south-west Saskatchewan, southern Saskatchewan, in regards to saving the Plains Health Centre. Mr. Speaker, 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.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition, basically they're all from Regina; every one of them is from Regina. Obviously, looking at this, it's from Regina Albert South constituency and Elphinstone constituency.

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

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

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, they're from Regina; they're from Balgonie; they're from all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plain 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 that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from throughout numerous communities throughout southern Saskatchewan.

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

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

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, from Rhein, Saskatchewan; Yorkton; Buchanan; and throughout the southern part of the province. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also

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

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Melville, Kipling, Carlyle, Langenburg, and other centres throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise as well on behalf of people in regards to the Plains Health Centre closure. 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.

Signatures are from Carlyle, Weyburn, Avonlea, and I even see one here from Brandon, Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The signatures on this petition are mostly from Regina but also from Moose Jaw.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today too to present a petition of names from people in the Regina area regarding the Plains Health Centre, with 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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the people of Regina in its entirety.

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 signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, do represent a rather broad cross-section of southern Saskatchewan, ranging from Swift Current, Waldeck, all the way across the province. We also have Moosomin on here, Weyburn, Central Butte right in the middle, among others.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of people wanting rental accommodation in Saskatchewan and landlords who want fairness.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take action to allow an increase in the security deposits on rental properties to the equivalence to one month's rent, and that your Hon. Assembly review the remedies available to landlords who are not given sufficient notice by Social Services' tenants who vacate properties and whose rent in their new accommodations is paid by social assistance without regard for outstanding obligations in previous rental agreements.

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners are from the Saskatoon, Regina, Springwater, and other parts of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a guest in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, Colin Maxwell, a former minister of Natural Resources for the province, now executive director of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. Colin is in Saskatchewan to launch National Wildlife Week tomorrow in Moose Jaw where I will be joining him at a school in Moose Jaw. And I ask all members to welcome Colin here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this afternoon to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly, a fine-looking gentleman seated behind the bar here, behind the government benches. There are a couple of fine-looking gentlemen there, Mr. Speaker, but Mr. Darrel Cunningham, who has served with great distinction in this House during the last term. He's now, I understand, visiting in southern Saskatchewan and has come to Regina on a vacation, and what beautiful weather he's chosen to do that on.

So I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming Mr. Cunningham to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I also would like to join with

other members in the Liberal caucus to welcome Mr. Cunningham to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Prairie Malt Expansion

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to congratulate Biggar Malt, one of the world's leading maltsters, in the announcement of an expansion of about 30 per cent in their facility in the town of Biggar. They are doing this expansion in order to meet South American demand for their product.

The expansion is worth about \$20 million and will increase production from their facility from 180,000 tonnes a year to 235,000 tonnes per year. Prairie Malt buys the production from about a half a million acres in Saskatchewan, a significant contributor to our expanding, diversified agricultural economy.

The company's breakthrough in South America is primarily because of the good work of the Canadian Wheat Board. And I want the members opposite to be aware, Mr. Speaker, that the Canadian Wheat Board is a strong agent for farmers and industry in Saskatchewan and a very good institution for the promotion of business and carry out international business. In fact in the words of the general manager of Prairie Malt: without the long-term vision of the Canadian Wheat Board, there is no way we could have had this success in South America.

So I want to again thank Prairie Malt for their contribution to our agricultural economy and congratulate them on the development of this expansion in their facility.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Liberal Team

Mr. Bjerneud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members of this House may or may not know, the trading deadline recently came and went, and I'm pleased to say that all 10 members of this team did not, and will not, be signing as free agents with any other team. As legendary coach Scotty Bowman would say, we're standing pat; I like the chemistry of this team.

The media states today that an offer has been made for members of our caucus to join another club — a third-place club I might add. When we heard this report we did our best to withhold our laughter because this, after all, is a very serious issue. But seriously, the fact that none of us can swim did have something to do with our decision. You see we're not about to jump on a sinking ship.

Mr. Speaker, the reports today, obviously fuelled by the coach of the third-place team, are based on the fact that he is without a 50-goal scorer, a point man, or a play-off calibre goal tender. If I might say so, the coach doesn't appear to have much direction either.

When a team is in third place, the play-offs are approaching and they are fading fast, what do they do? They simply wish. In this case they wish out loud for a Wayne Gretzky. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have 10 Wayne Gretzkys over here and our team is set. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for the third-place team there will be no additions. They are not ending the season on a roll or with any momentum, and in fact they are in a slide; one that will undoubtedly see them swept in the first round of the play-offs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Cancer Month

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada April is cancer month. This is a very important month for the Canadian Cancer Society. It concentrates its fund-raising activities in April for cancer research. Among other efforts it sells daffodils as a sign of hope in the face of this dreadful and dreaded disease.

We all hope that someday research will lead to the end of this scourge on modern society and we should all pledge to do what we can to both assist that research and to make the changes to our own environments and lifestyles which might contribute to the spread of cancer.

Cancer has always been with us but increasingly it is becoming a plague, connected as it is with so much of the biological, chemical, environmental, and nutritional conditions of modern life. The Saskatchewan foundation informs us that one in three of us during our lifetime will be afflicted and that in all of Canada, cancer increases at a rate of two and a half to three per cent a year.

Also during this month we should publicly show our thanks for the work of the Canadian and Saskatchewan cancer foundations and for the invaluable research they fund. Working with the government for instance, a nine and a half million dollar renovation and construction program is taking place at the Allan Blair cancer clinic in Regina which will double the size of the facility and we hope someday bring an end to this disease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Liberal Party Loyalty

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to comment on a media story that ran this morning that I certainly view as a joke. Obviously some people are under the misconception that this is April Fool's Week.

Yesterday CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio proposed three outlandish scenarios as part of April Fool's Day. Listeners had to pick the true one. I found each one of these to be quite humorous. At the same time the Saskatchewan Roughriders sent out a press release saying that the legendary NFL (National Football League) coach, Don Shula, was coming to work for the Riders.

These pranks caused many a chuckle throughout the day and then this morning I looked out my window and found Mother Nature was still trying to fool everyone. Is this not spring? It isn't funny. Unfortunately some people are trying to extend the trickery, and I would like to remind them that April Fool's Day does not last all week long.

I would like to inform the people of Saskatchewan, and particularly those in the Liberal constituencies, that we are continuing our loyalty and support to the cause of the Liberal Saskatchewan Party, the official opposition caucus, and to the people of Saskatchewan.

We have not approached the Conservative Party or any other party with the intention of crossing this floor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order.

Z99's Ninth Radiothon

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's time to visit the land of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Now I'll ask all members to give to the member who's making the member's statement the courtesy of listening to the statement.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps this will help. It's time that we visited the land of Z. Z99's zealous morning crew, C.C. and Lori Lindsay, reached their zenith Friday with the help of zephyr and the zip of great and generous people of Regina and the Regina zone.

In their ninth annual radiothon to raise money for the new pediatric playroom at the Allan Blair cancer clinic, C.C. and Lori Lindsay were the morning crew, the afternoon crew, the evening crew, the night crew, then the morning crew, the afternoon crew all over again.

They had set an ambitious goal to raise \$40,000. Then they simply blew by that goal and they raised \$46,768 for that pediatric playroom at the Allan Blair clinic.

Z99's C.C. and Lori Lindsay have given of themselves to make our city and our province a better place to call home. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the best were at it again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

1996 Saskatchewan Indian Winter Games

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm about to explain why it is winter's been hanging on so long. This Sunday and for the four days following, the Onion Lake First Nation in my constituency will host the 1996 Saskatchewan Indian Winter Games.

After that, Mr. Speaker, spring will begin.

The Saskatchewan Indian Winter Games have been played since 1974, and especially in the last five years they have grown in interest and participation, including as they do an emphasis on inter-relation of the mind, body, spirit, and emotions.

At Onion Lake this next week, the 72 Saskatchewan first nations will be represented by over 1500 athletes. And if you throw in the coaches, chaperons, and visitors, they expect in excess of 2,000 visitors to their community.

The teams will compete in sports such as hockey, volleyball, badminton, and broomball. I suspect there will be a social event or two as well.

Mr. Speaker, these games are just one more sign of the growing confidence, self-awareness, and spirit of first nations people.

I want to wish all the athletes, coaches, and visitors as well . . . I want to give my best wishes to all the athletes, coaches, and visitors as well. To Chief Wallace Fox and the organizers, my hat goes off to you. To the dozens of volunteers who have contributed their time — thank you. And finally to the band membership — be proud; this is a great event.

For those of you still wondering when spring begins, it's right after the closing ceremonies next week.

Now let the games begin.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moose Jaw Science Fair

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday my colleague, the member from Canora-Pelly, talked about the science fair in Foam Lake. I want to join him in commending these fairs by mentioning the one I was pleased to attend this weekend in Moose Jaw. The school districts of Buffalo Plains, Thunder Creek, and Borderland held their fair at the Palliser Institute.

First, like the member from Canora-Pelly, I want to acknowledge the fair's sponsors — SaskEnergy, Saskatchewan Education, and Kalium Chemicals. These sponsors know they will need scientists in the future and are making a wise investment today.

I also mention Rhonda Phillips, a Lumsden teacher, writer, and environmentalist, who was one of the organizers.

Most of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to praise the students and their projects, which showed a level of scientific sophistication and knowledge which frankly I don't remember many of us possessing in our school days. There truly were some very high-quality projects.

In particular, there was a project on fibre optics, which helped me to understand how vital this Saskatchewan product is to Saskatchewan communications. As well, there were demonstrations of flight, wind power, truth in advertising, and

many more, all of which made my attendance very worthwhile. And I know others felt the same.

Mr. Speaker, these young scientists are the Pasteurs, the Edisons, the Curies of tomorrow. It was a pleasure to see their initial work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hospital Emergency Services

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring to the attention of this House an incident involving Alice Weber, a resident of Southey who was transported by ambulance to the Pasqua Hospital 10 days ago, after encountering severe pain and vomiting.

Upon arriving at the Pasqua, she was quickly examined, given Demerol, and informed that there was a bed shortage, and she was sent back home. Two days later, Ms. Weber's condition had not improved, so her family contacted the doctor at Fort Qu'Appelle who admitted her to the hospital in that community where she is currently recovering while undergoing tests.

Mr. Speaker, if there was little or no bed space to treat these kind of emergency cases, will the Premier explain what will happen if the Plains is closed and access to emergency services are further reduced?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Health, I would say to the member opposite, the first thing we're going to do when that particular member raises issues is check the facts.

We'll do that, and when we do, we will bring back an answer to you, either when the minister returns or when I have an opportunity to check the facts, because as we have seen in past instances . . .

An Hon. Member: — Is he taking notice?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — No, I'm not taking notice. I'm giving you an answer, is that your facts, sir, are often very, very incorrect. And so the first thing we will do is we'll check the facts and then we'll get back to you.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the minister did not know the answer and tried to bluff his way through it. But, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Weber and her husband believe that the health care system let them down.

Mr. Speaker, this is what health care comes down to: people want to know that they have a system in place that is safe and reliable. The people in rural Saskatchewan have known this for awhile and urban residents are now finding the same thing.

Will the Premier explain why people like Ms. Weber have to

shop around for health care?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again, we will check the facts because that member is well known for having inaccurate information when he comes to the House.

The second thing I would say, though, it's a serious accusation to accuse a professional, either a doctor or the medical community, of early release of a patient that then leads to some complication.

Mr. Speaker, I would challenge that member, if he believes that, to say it outside, to name the individual he's referring to. Because hiding behind, hiding behind the rules of the House to play your political game . . . Well the member opposite is not serious about this question because he continually yells from his seat as I try to answer.

If you are serious about this and believe that you're on solid ground, step outside of the House and make that accusation against this individual and the hospital involved. Because I can say to you that in the past your information you bring here is very inaccurate and is done simply to grandstand to try to gain political points.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the minister answering the question forgot who it was that had to apologize to this House for incorrect facts, and it was the Health minister only days ago. And perhaps he'll be up again.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the so-called health care reform process, this government has spoken of the development of an efficient and responsive health care system. However, the Minister of Health and his government refuse to acknowledge that this government's health care funding decisions are impacting the quality of care the people of Saskatchewan need and deserve.

Will the Premier explain why he and his government have chosen to put a gun to the head of the Regina Health District Board, forcing them to close the Plains Health Centre, when people like Ms. Weber are being turned away from proper and responsible health care?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to take up the member . . . take issue with the member's statement that somehow there is pressure being put on the Regina Health Board to make the decision. Obviously your own member — previous member of the Liberal Party . . . if the member would listen, he might be able to pick up the response and then wouldn't have to repeat the question over and over again.

But the issue here is that there is an elected board in place in Regina. One of the members of that board is a former member of your caucus. And I remember when Anita was in the House, saying that if she had an opportunity to make the decision, she would keep the Plains hospital open. But you will know, sir, clearly, that when she was in a position of looking at the books, looking at the books and what is best for the health care in Regina, she chose to vote to close the Plains hospital.

So I say to you, sir, you should talk to your own caucus. And I think this is more about keeping your caucus . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Order. I want to remind hon. members, when asking questions, it's most appropriate to extend the courtesy to listen to the answer and to let it be heard. I want to ask for the cooperation of the members and I'll ask the Deputy Premier if he'd like to complete his response. If not, the next question.

Drug Treatment Services

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this NDP (New Democratic Party) government made many choices in last week's budget, some of which the Minister of Finance claims have been dictated by finances. The opposition agrees that there are occasions when finances must be a factor, but not at the expense of the well-being of Saskatchewan residents.

Yet this is exactly what the NDP have done by eliminating funding and closing the White Spruce Treatment Centre, a facility which treats our young people who have drug and alcohol dependencies. Will the Minister of Health explain why economics is more important to this government than the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being and ultimately the saving of the lives of our young people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. What is taking place as it would relate to the services provided by Whitespruce at the present time is, negotiations are going on between the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union), the union affected, as well as the Department of Health, Calder place in Saskatoon, and Whitespruce, to find what efficiencies can be made in that system. And when a decision is finally made, there will be an announcement and the minister will have comments to make on the decision that is made.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister and the member making the comments, relocating this program to Saskatoon will not result in the same level of service.

Whitespruce provides an excellent atmosphere for healing, with a variety of outdoor activities and an isolated location that enables these young people to face and to deal with their problems. In the last two years alone, more than 500 young people of every background imaginable have undergone treatment. The same atmosphere will not exist if

the program is amalgamated into an adult facility.

Mr. Speaker, a good indication of the kind of treatment youngsters receive at Whitespruce is evident in the fact that many of these young people do not want to leave the centre at the end of their stay. What better validation could there be for a drug and alcohol treatment facility?

Will the minister explain when his government intends to get its priorities in order so that lives, and not economics, dictate how health care dollars are spent?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, when you talk about getting priorities straight, I think it would help and also help the popularity of the Liberal Party if they were consistent in their view of whether they wanted cuts, as the member from Thunder Creek continues to talk about, and balanced budget — which I think he's onside with, with that side of the formula — or the member from Humboldt and Wood River who say we should be spending more and therefore running deficits.

And I think one thing that you're causing in the public is a great deal of dismay and concern, even among your own members, because nobody quite knows where you're at on this issue of spending versus taxes and balancing the budget.

On the specific issue that you raise, you will know that there are many professional people in the Department of Health and in the community working on this project. Now it may be the decision they end up with is not the one that coincides with your view of the world. But all things being equal, I will accept the advice from the department officials and the officials at the local level, and I think we'll arrive at a situation where the needs of the community are taken care of in a system that is rationalized in the best interest of the patient as well as the taxpayers of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Arts Board Film Festival

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

Madam Minister, later this month the Dunlop Art Gallery at the Regina Public Library is going to be running a film and video program called *Queer City Cinema*. The ad says *Queer City Cinema* will feature lesbian and gay film and video coming out to a theatre near you. The ad also says this show is presented with the financial assistance of the Canada Council and the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

Madam Minister, how much taxpayer money has the Saskatchewan Arts Board given to *Queer City Cinema*, and do you consider this an appropriate use of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I am astonished that the member from Rosthern would be asking this question. The

member from Rosthern should know better than anyone else in this province that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

And he comes, the member, Mr. Speaker, comes from Rosthern, the home of the Rosthern Junior College, with a notable history of music and drama. Some distinguished members . . . alumni from that college indeed reside on this side of the House.

There is the Station Arts Centre in Rosthern. Just down the road from the member's town of Rosthern is the Northcote gallery, the Scrimshaw gallery, which is part of the old north-west and it attracts many visitors. The Barn Playhouse attracts many visitors, run by the family of Vicky Dyck who also is a graduate of the RJC (Rosthern Junior College).

Mr. Speaker, again I am astonished at the lack of tolerance and the kind of attitude that the member from Rosthern would have towards the arts in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Madam Minister, I would hope that Madam Minister is not trying to equate *Queer City Cinema* with RJC and some of the other functions that you are referring to, or some other criteria of beauty.

The curator of *Queer City* video is an individual by the name of Gary Varro, who knows how to milk the old Arts Board quite well. Two years ago he got \$9,000 to produce *Gaynada* — I think you're aware of that — about a fictitious nation whose citizens are gay. Now he's got more taxpayers' money to put on a homosexual film festival.

Madam Minister, when are you going to stop wasting taxpayers' money on this type of activity and maybe give it to our RJC? How can you be funding homosexual film festivals when there are so many vital government services being cut?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I would like for the hon. member opposite's information to tell him that the Dunlop Art Gallery is one of the galleries that is partially supported by funding from the Arts Board — one of 27 agencies. The funding that the Arts Board donates to the Dunlop Gallery on an annual basis, last year it was \$45,000.

The cost of this particular show which he refers to, which has toured the province several times, been sponsored by several galleries, the cost is estimated at about \$2,000. But that's not to say, Mr. Speaker, that this is \$2,000 taxpayers' dollars. The Dunlop Gallery has many sources of revenue of which the Arts Board contribution is only part. And so I think that the member should be sure to get his facts straight before he makes allegations in the House.

He is quoted as saying on CBC radio this morning, Mr. Speaker, that politicians indeed should not be dictating the specifics of the arts and that the board is supposed to operate free of political interference, Mr. Speaker. His words.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Madam Minister, during your budget consultation around the province you asked Saskatchewan people to identify the most important and least important services provided by government. According to your final report, one of the least important areas is the arts funding.

Now look at the priorities you choose. Municipalities already have been cut. They're going to be cut another 25 per cent. The Arts Board gets cut by 2.7 per cent. Madam Minister, why did you ignore your own consultation processes? Why did you make the Arts Board funding a priority at the same time you're offloading to municipalities?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that there are many people in Saskatchewan who would agree that artistic expression is a very important element of what we are in Saskatchewan, and the Arts Board supports that. We support that.

I think it's important to know in the consultations that people were asked to prioritize the issues that were of importance to them. Let me point out that in all the arts and culture activities in this province, the government supports to the extent of less than one-tenth of one per cent of the total budget, Mr. Speaker. I think that is already a reflection of the wishes of some of the people in this province and we need not do more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Drug Treatment Services

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, today's paper confirms what we have said since 1992 — that your government plans to close Whitespruce Youth Treatment Centre in Yorkton. In fact, Mr. Minister, your government has denied for years that Whitespruce will be closed or converted. Your budget hit list dated January '94, leaked not long ago, had Whitespruce slated for possible closure.

Mr. Minister, this has obviously been part of your plan for years. Why have you been trying to pretend that you haven't planned to hit yet another rural Saskatchewan when the opposite is true?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, this will be repetitious because I answered this question previously to the member from Humboldt. But we have had a great deal of consultation with the people at Whitespruce as well as Calder Centre in Saskatoon. And at the present time there are discussions going on with SGEU, the employees involved, I believe, at both centres and also the staff at the two centres, as well as the Department of Health, are involved in discussions.

What we will see coming from those discussions, I would believe, is a rationalization of the system that would accomplish two things: one, meet the needs of the community in terms of providing service that is being provided at those centres now; and secondly, deal with it in a way that the taxpayers of

Saskatchewan . . . which is important, and I think the member will admit is important, that we achieve proper finance results that will help us meet the needs that your party, sir, without putting too fine a point on it, put us in; that is, \$15 billion in debt.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I find that very interesting. I find it interesting that the minister continually feels that 15 billion is appropriate when even his own audited statements show the debt at only about 7 billion in 1991, now risen to over 10 billion.

And the fact is, Mr. Speaker, coming back to the debt, that as the auditor was pointing out this morning, has been increasing, one of the things that the government could do is continue to operate this facility at Whitespruce. We've talked to employees there who tell us that this facility is running at capacity, is providing a very good service, that there is no need to move it.

Now one would wonder why this minister, answering for the Minister of Health, would suggest that it's imperative that they move it. Is this, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker, not another hit on rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister? Why not allow the facility to continue to operate and provide the good service rather than spending all the extra dollars to move the people to Calder.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, if the member from Moosomin is being fair and looks at the changes that are occurring in the budget as it would relate to government spending and employment within government, you will know that the budget I think was very fair to rural Saskatchewan. And I'm sure that if you look at the numbers, you would readily admit that.

But in terms of your question, I think what was more important than your question was the heckling from the member from Maple Creek, who said, we don't want to put drug addicts back on the street. Now this tells you something about the Conservatives and where they're coming from on this whole issue. Calder Centre and Whitespruce are not detention centres, as the member from Maple Creek would try to indicate. They are rehabilitation centres. And I think I would start from that point, that before you're critical of the amalgamation and changes that are taking place, try to understand what rehabilitation is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Forced Institutional Care

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Social Service or his designate.

Is it acceptable to your government that any individual capable of living on their own with attendant care be forced into an institution?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services is not in the House at the moment and perhaps before

we designate an appropriate minister for response, we need a little more elaboration as to the question. I must say, with the greatest respect for the member from Greystone, I'm not quite sure what she's getting at.

Obviously the general answer would be no, but I don't know the details of what the question is.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will do is pass to the Premier a copy of a letter, which is the second letter to the Minister of Social Services on this matter.

Mr. Premier, a specific case has been brought to the attention of your Minister of Social Services and to the attention of public servants paid to exercise compassion and paid to exercise common sense. And I quote from the letter that I pass to you today, and it's dated March 25, 1996. And it is a final plea, Mr. Premier, in a long-standing wrangle over this issue. And I quote:

Carol is currently staying with her sister as she attempts to organize attendant care so she can go back to her own home. Staff at Social Services have made it clear that Carol's file will be reviewed again in May and if she is not living in her own home, the house will be considered an asset and her benefits will be cut off. However, she cannot live in her own home without attendant care which . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the member has had a long preamble and I'll ask her to go directly to her question.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to you, Mr. Premier. This woman has been placed in a catch-22 situation which in fact is going to force her to sell her home and move to an institutional type of arrangement. I ask again: is it the policy of your government to force individuals with disabilities into institutional care against their will?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I've just been given a copy of the letter dated March 25, 1996, directed to the Minister of Social Services. I thank the member for doing so.

The obvious answer to the member's question is that it's not a policy to force people into institutional care. There are some circumstances, based upon the nature of the health condition, financial condition, and other circumstances, socially and economically, where there may be no other option available.

In this particular case, what I will do is ask the Minister of Social Services to look at this file again very carefully from top to bottom and to get back to the member as quickly as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you, Mr. Premier.

In the long run I'm hoping that the consideration of your government will be that it would be much better use of

taxpayers' dollars to help an individual maintain independence, and it'll be far more cost effective than paying for institutional care that's neither wanted nor needed.

This woman is prepared to do absolutely anything to save her home and to save her dignity. I would appreciate as well, Mr. Premier, when you're looking into this matter, if you would look to the policies of your own government that are preventing the Saskatchewan Social Services Appeal Board to even carry out its own decisions.

Will your government today tell me if indeed that will be the case, not only looking into this case but understanding that the Saskatchewan social assistance appeal board has had its hands tied.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say to the hon. member yes, when I said to her in her last question that the minister has been . . . I don't know if he has the letter or not but certainly I'll forward it to him today. The letter contains questions pertaining to the appeal board and the whole functioning of the board and the particular case that is here.

And the answer is we will have them look into it, the department people, and get a response back. As a general policy the answer obviously is we don't like to institutionalize people. Our wellness reform and other reforms which are the leaders in the nation are designed to that. We pumped extra monies in, as the former minister of Social Services has indicated to me, in Aids to Independent Living. That's the general thrust and approach.

This particular case however, may be one which cannot be fitted into the available circumstances and the available facilities for the people of Saskatchewan. All I can do is to say as Premier, I'll ask the department and the minister to look at this matter with as much dispatch as possible and as much compassion as possible, keeping in mind what the circumstances are and we'll get to the member as quickly as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Renewable Energy Options

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Preparing for the next century was the theme of last Thursday's provincial budget, and of course when one thinks about the next century and future needs, renewable energy options is obviously one of the issues that we must consider and think about very carefully.

The NDP government have spoken at length about how this province and its people must be visionary. Yet in the budget this government has chosen to eliminate the Energy Conservation and Development Authority. Will the minister explain why his government has decided to take a back seat instead of a visionary, lead role in developing renewable energy options?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — On behalf of the minister, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to answer the question. The entire government went through some very difficult processes in coming up with the budget, the very difficult circumstances of the federal government leaving us in the fiscal position as they did. And we wanted to protect the important programs of health care, education, social services, that the people of the province have come to appreciate.

In order to do that we had to, instead of raising taxes, we had to make some tough decisions. And part of those tough decisions was to look at the role of SECDA (Saskatchewan Energy Conservation and Development Authority). It's performed a very valuable role. But the functions of SECDA will be moved from the Authority into the Saskatchewan Research Council. Some of those positions will be transferred there. We have a very high priority on energy efficiency and conservation. That role will now be performed adequately and very well by the Saskatchewan Research Council.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this government's commitment to renewable energy options has been clearly demonstrated in its less than honourable handling of two proposals: one dealing with co-generation and, most recently, a wind-power demonstration project.

Mr. Speaker, instead of taking a leadership role and developing an area of expertise in this province, the NDP government chose to abandon any opportunity that would demonstrate leadership and vision. They chose to allow other jurisdictions to take the lead.

Can the minister explain how this government can claim to be committed to energy conservation when it is clear they are demonstrating a lack of vision and merely paying lip-service to this important issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well contraire, Mr. Speaker. The government has paid a very high regard and emphasis on energy conservation.

I'd point to the rink initiative program where we've touched many, many rural communities by going in and working in partnership with the local rink, the local recreation authority, the experts, in terms of providing energy conservation expertise. There have been thousands and thousands of dollars saved by rural communities. And that's just one example of the emphasis that we've put on energy conservation and developing the efficiencies that we have.

We have expertise within the province, both in the energy sector and the energy conservation sector. We will continue to use that expertise to the benefit of Saskatchewan people in preparing a plan, not only one that we can afford into the next century but one that will work well and serve the people well into the next century as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Don Ching Named New Head of SaskTel

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make an important announcement with respect to a decision reached by the board of directors of SaskTel.

As you will know, just over two months ago the board accepted the resignation of Mr. Fred Van Parys as president and CEO (chief executive officer) at SaskTel. We were successful in getting Mr. Van Parys to stay on board with us over the next year to retain his expertise on a consulting basis and to help with transition to new leadership.

Although Dan Baldwin agreed to fill the role on an interim basis, and did so very ably, Mr. Van Parys's resignation left an important void that we moved very quickly to fill. Immediately following Mr. Van Parys's resignation, the SaskTel board struck a committee which retained Deloitte & Touche to conduct an executive search.

A total of 23 candidates were considered, six were interviewed, and a final short list of three was interviewed a second time. On the basis of those extensive evaluations, a recommendation was brought to the board for approval.

Before I go on, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind everyone that we live in challenging times in this province, and SaskTel is certainly not exempt from this reality. In fact SaskTel finds itself at a very important crossroads, and competent leadership is absolutely crucial to the future of this corporation.

Long-distance competition has arrived, Mr. Speaker, and will be full-blown by September of this year. Ongoing evaluations and reviews of the Crown sector continue. Labour issues are at the forefront, and technological advances are the norm. For the past 89 years, SaskTel has played an important social and economic role in this province.

It was incumbent on the SaskTel board to ensure that our new president not only has the competence and experience to deal with the complex and challenging issues that are before us, but also to understand and be sensitive to our province, our customers, and the role of the Crown sector in the telecommunications arena.

On the basis of those very important considerations and evaluations, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the board has named Don Ching to the position of president and CEO of SaskTel effective April 15, 1996.

As you will know, Don Ching brings a wealth of experience . . .

The Speaker: — Order! Order, order, order. Order. I'm going to ask all members to come to order and to allow the minister to make her ministerial statement. There will be opportunity provided to others to respond to that, and that's the appropriate time to make comments. Order. Order.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you will know, Don Ching brings a wealth of experience, commitment and competence to the table, and I invite all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming our new president to SaskTel. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess this government continues to shock the people of Saskatchewan each and every day. This, though, has come to a new low. In fact when a government for as many years as you people opposite stood up and slammed the Conservatives for the kind of patronage that they had . . . and then they did have it. It was ridiculous.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now it is equally appropriate that when the opposition is responding to the ministerial statement that the member responding on behalf of the opposition has the attention of the Assembly. Order. And I will ask all members to cooperate and to allow the member to make his statement.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the people of Saskatchewan are obviously shocked today at such a statement coming from a government that for years chastised the former Conservative government, and rightfully so, for the amount of patronage, the open . . . the way they abused the patronage in this province, but now we've come to a new low where in fact we have ministerial statements where we get up and we're proud as a government that we can take former law partners and friends and New Democrat Party workers, on and on, and that in fact they're proud to stick them in some of the most highly paid jobs at the taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is shameful. I think this is shameful. I think it really shows why this minister did not send an advance copy to the opposition party today, knowing full well of course that the people would not be accepting this. And if you think this is some cute way . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order! Order! Order. Now I want to remind the members of the government caucus that the minister was allowed to make the statement, and I want to remind the members of the third party that they will have an opportunity if they wish to bring comment. But it is the opposition caucus which has the floor and should be entitled to make that response to the Assembly. Now I ask all members to cooperate.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for bringing them to order. I know . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Now the hon. member from Wood River knows exactly what the Speaker is going to say, and so the Speaker will say it. And that's that a comment on the Speaker's ruling is certainly not in order, and I'll ask the hon. member to proceed directly to conclude his remarks in his response to the ministerial statement. Order.

Mr. McPherson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that given probably the sad state of affairs of this statement day, I

think the Liberal caucus can safely make an announcement here today also, and that is that we will be reviewing each and every one of your political patronage appointments. And I say, shame on you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is nice to have the opportunity to comment on so momentous an occasion as we have before us this afternoon.

We want you to know, Mr. Speaker, and members opposite, that we are not shocked nor are we surprised by this appointment because we predicted it for a long time. It was clearly obvious that Mr. Cha-Ching was going to have to have some kind of reward, and it was pretty obvious that public pressure was against this reward when such trial balloons were floated by the government to attempt to ascertain and determine whether or not there was acceptance of big patronage payments to Mr. Ching in the way of being appointed to the new organization that was just sold to the British when he was of course offered a severance package as a trial balloon through the media and that sort of thing.

Obviously that sort of thing didn't work, and so it became plainly clear to us that he would be appointed as the head of SaskTel.

I do believe that the opposition has made a good point when they say that keeping on the other leader of this organization in a role of consulting is wrong. I think probably the people of Saskatchewan will be just as upset by seeing that we now in effect have two leaders of SaskTel, two presidents; one is a consultant and one is the man doing the job. If the man can't do the job on his own, why are we hiring a consultant to help him to do it.

I mean surely you must have to have some qualifications for this job. Surely you must have to have more qualifications than to be the best buddy of the Premier who happens to have shared an apartment for a long time with him.

And certainly it's too far past Christmas for this to be classified as a Christmas present. Oh, I forgot, it is Easter. Well this is pretty big for an Easter present as well. And like the members opposite here told us earlier this morning, it's too late for April Fool's, so it can't be a sad joke that's going to be changed tomorrow, I don't suppose. Although that would certainly be the best way for the Premier to handle this whole catastrophe, would be to simply call it a bad April's joke that got out of control and we're going to step back, reconsider, and it really isn't going to happen after all.

That would be the best news for the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, because Mr. Cha-Ching has no business . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member knows that the reference to the individual's name and to make fun of it is certainly not in order. Order, order. And I would ask the hon. member to withdraw that unparliamentary reference and to wrap up his response to the ministerial statement.

Mr. Goohsen: — I certainly comply with your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I want to apologize for my stuttering as well.

I do believe though that the people of Saskatchewan will be terribly shocked to see an injustice of this nature happen in such a clear and unacceptable way of defying the people's message to this government.

They have told this government loud and clear in their consultation process that they did not want political patronage as the foremost reason for people to get jobs. And they have said clearly that they want people to have some kind of qualificational merit, is the term we want to use, rather than simply knowing the Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — To request leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery, I would like to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a special individual and a couple of people with him.

Seated in your gallery is the Premier of the Northwest Territories, Don Morin. Mr. Premier is here today to observe the House and meet with individuals in the city of Regina. And I'd like to welcome you here today, and we arranged the weather to be just perfect for you, so you wouldn't feel out of place.

But with the Premier is Ferne Babiuk who is executive assistant to the Premier — Ferne, if you'd stand up — as well as Don Avison who is principal secretary to the Premier.

We wish you enjoyable stay in Regina and look forward to meeting with you later.

Mr. Speaker, if I could while I'm on my feet, as well I would like to join others who have introduced my friend, Colin Maxwell, who is with the Canadian Wildlife Federation. Mr. Maxwell, obviously a well known minister of the Environment I believe in the 1980s, who served in this Assembly with a number of us. I just want to welcome you back to Saskatchewan and pretty soon, hopefully, making your home back here in the prairie province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Belanger: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also join the Deputy Premier in welcoming our very special guests from the Territories. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, we certainly enjoy having you here today. And the only bad part of your visit is bringing all your bad weather with you. We thought we were in spring, but any way I'd like to also, on behalf of my colleagues here, welcome you to the Legislative Assembly and also ask my colleagues to welcome you as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The answer to question 30 is converted to motions for return (debatable).

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might be permitted a bit of latitude to deal with the next 34 questions. The member from Melfort-Tisdale asked some questions with respect to Crown tendering in the only fashion he could because you cannot ask a question touching more than one fiscal year and no more than one Crown corporation. So it was divided. What was really a single question wound up being divided into 34 questions. Rather than go through them individually, it has been our policy to answer what question we can, convert those we can't. In this case, the government is able to answer about two-thirds of them, and we will be converting about a third of them.

What I'd like to do is have members, if they have their blues in front of them, I will go through the list of those we tabled; I'll table them as a package. And then I'll go through the list of those we're going to convert, and members can mark it off on their blues. If that's acceptable, it'll save us a lot of time.

Leave granted.

The Speaker: — I'll ask the Government House Leader then first of all; will you identify to the Assembly those numbers of questions which you are providing the answers for.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I am tabling the answers to questions no. 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, and 63.

The Speaker: — The answers are tabled for questions 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62 and 63.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And then the members can also mark on their blues, we will be converting questions no. 34, 35, 39, 40, 44, 45, 49, 50, 54, 55, 59, 60, 64, and 65.

The Speaker: — Questions, the response . . . or the questions for the . . . excuse me. Questions 34, 35, 39, 40, 44, 45, 49, 50, 54, 55, 59, 64 and 65 are converted to motions for return (debatable).

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, and 60 as well. Did you read 60?

The Speaker: — And 60? And 60. Thank you very much.

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. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to join in the budget debate, Mr. Speaker. I listened to the opposition for the last . . . since session started. They talked a lot about health care, like they were really interested in doing something for the people. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, you look back at the Liberal opposition background, you look to the Thatcher years, Mr. Speaker, to the Liberal Thatcher years, and now you look to the federal Liberals that are cutting \$47 million from our health care systems. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker.

This government, Mr. Speaker, is back-filling the federal government cuts. This government is committed to the health care system. This government, Mr. Speaker, is working for . . . the NDP government is working for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and they are committed to the people of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Order. Order! Order, order. Now I'll ask members of the House to allow the hon. member for Saskatchewan Rivers to proceed in his debate on the budget address and I will ask members to refrain from conversations across the floor from their seats.

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for bringing the opposition back . . .

The Speaker: — Order! Now the hon. member for Saskatchewan Rivers knows that it's inappropriate to comment on the rulings of the Speaker, and I'll ask him to simply proceed with his debate, and if he fails to do that, I'll go to another speaker.

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw that.

The federal government also, Mr. Speaker, cut \$52 million to social programs. And if you look, Mr. Speaker, they are cutting to the people less fortunate. This government, Mr. Speaker, is committed to the poor. They are committed to putting the \$52 million back into social programs. They are committed to the Saskatchewan people; the Saskatchewan way.

Mr. Speaker, this government again had replaced or back-filled money that the federal government had taken away from this province — the NDP commitment and the Saskatchewan way.

Again, Mr. Speaker, once again the federal government had cut \$15 million to post-secondary education. This government, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government, is committed to post-secondary education and to the Saskatchewan people and they are replacing \$11 million back into post-secondary education — the Saskatchewan way.

Mr. Speaker, we know the federal government had to reduce their deficit but, Mr. Speaker, why wouldn't the federal government look at their own spending first? The federal Liberals took 70 per cent to social programs, while cutting their own expenditure by less than 9 per cent. Maybe a good place for the federal government is to start by cutting their Senate and giving less tax breaks to the corporate companies and the banks.

Mr. Speaker, this budget provides tax relief for individuals and families. Also, Mr. Speaker, this government is using targeted tax incentives, cutting red tape, to encourage businesses and growth, and, Mr. Speaker, 9 per cent investment to tax credit in support of manufacturing and processing; a reduction in small business income tax rate to 8 per cent; retaining a reduction in the aviation fuel tax rate from 7 per cent to 3.5 per cent a litre; beginning January 1, 1997, improved tax treatments for Saskatchewan-based truckers.

Mr. Speaker, this government is investing up to \$238 million over four years to strengthen and diversify agriculture and food industries.

Mr. Speaker, people asked for smaller government — so this government reduced and streamlined. Covering for the misplaced federal Liberals in order to maintain social programs, this does come with a price. The province is forced to make up for the difference elsewhere. This is being done by restructuring, cutting administration, eliminating duplications and overlaps, and finding ways to deliver existing services more effective.

This savings found in these areas are being redirected to the essential services. By making internal changes, the cost to the government will be reduced by \$50 million this year.

Areas of saving are Department of Highways, \$6.3 million; Department of Health, 7 million; student loans, 6 million; Agriculture Credit Corporation, 3 million; Crop Insurance, 5 million.

Mr. Speaker, downsizing comes with lost jobs, but this government, with SGEU, working together to ensure the actual people affected will be very low. Overall, Mr. Speaker, this government is working for the interests of the taxpayers by reducing the cost of government and still providing services.

Mr. Speaker, in closing and giving other members a chance to debate the budget, I will be supporting this budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to begin on a personal note and offer a personal perspective on

one facet of the budget before I make my larger remarks. And that facet of the budget has to do with the elimination of funding provincially for the Saskatchewan Conservation and Energy Development Authority.

And I want to say that I very much regret that funding for SECDA was cut in this budget. I was one who hoped that we might have been able to spare SECDA and keep that important work moving forward to put Saskatchewan in a leadership position in terms of energy conservation and development in North America.

And I think of the Allan Blakeney government, now more than a decade past, and of the wonderful work that that government did toward energy sustainability. And at that time, Saskatchewan was really in the forefront of energy conservation measures in all of Canada. And then the Devine government came in and those energy conservations were some of the first casualties to go.

I'm very pleased to say that this government didn't sacrifice SECDA in its first term when it very easily could have, given the enormous financial constraints that we faced. But I also need to say that I'm very saddened that we have been forced to sacrifice it at this juncture in our history.

I want to say to those individuals who worked at SECDA, they should not take this as a sign that their work wasn't valued and wasn't important — I know I speak for large numbers of my colleagues on this side of the House — that the work done at SECDA was very, very valued and very important and had a lot of support in the caucus.

At the end of the day, the decision was made that, given the financial constraints we were under, we could not continue to fund SECDA. But they should not interpret that as a lack of appreciation for the work that they were doing.

I want to say also to the board members of SECDA that their work was very well done. They provided excellent guidance over the last four years for the work that was done by SECDA employees. And I particularly want to commend the board members for their efforts and for their partnership working with Mr. John Mitchell who was head of SECDA.

This leads me then to my larger budget remarks because I believe that had the province not been forced to pick up the \$114 million in federal cuts, we would still have a SECDA today. And I think that's unfortunate that the province was put in a position where it had to back-fill those \$114 million worth of federal cuts.

And I call this budget of 1996 the back-fill budget because that, in a word, is what this budget is all about — back-filling the federal cuts to health, education, and social services, and taking the necessary steps to still bring in a balanced budget for this province.

The people of Saskatchewan will know, after more than a decade of deficit budgets and the terrible legacy of the Devine years, that this government made a solemn pledge in the last

election that it would bring in balanced budgets — that it would bring in balanced budgets, not just for one year, but for four years. There was a four-year plan put before Saskatchewan people last year to balance the budgets.

(1445)

And we stuck to that commitment during the provincial election. Indeed before the provincial election and last year in this House we brought forth balanced budget legislation to say that never again should Saskatchewan people have to go through the agony and the despair and the destruction of deficit financing. And that we were putting this province's finances on a stable footing.

And this year for the second year in a row, Saskatchewan has a balanced budget. But at a cost to civil servants, such as employees at SECDA, and certainly at a cost to other programing in government. This was a question of priorities and prioritizing things.

Mr. Speaker, I have a bone to pick with the federal government in terms of their prioritizing. Because had they prioritized their affairs more judiciously, Saskatchewan and other provinces wouldn't be in the position of having to cut social services, education, post-secondary education, health care, in the way that they're doing, or to back-fill as the alternative.

What kind of choices or alternatives did the federal government have? I don't think there's any question, there's no argument, knowing the cost of deficit financing — from this side of the House, at least — that the federal government really had little option but to deal with its financial affairs and put its financial house in order.

My beef with the federal government, however, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the fact that in 1994 nearly \$40 billion of uncollected corporate taxes sat uncollected. And this last year, in 1995, a similar amount of corporate taxes went uncollected.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, in their April, 1996 *Monitor*, their publication, notes that *The Globe and Mail's* corporate database lists 244 publicly traded corporations with deferred taxes of more than 25 million. Five of them enjoyed tax deferrals of more than \$1 billion each.

An Hon. Member: — How much?

Mr. Koenker: — Five of the large corporations enjoyed tax deferrals of more than \$1 billion each.

Now I would say, Mr. Speaker, if the federal government had their priorities right, they would do something about the uncollected corporate taxes, and bring those into the federal treasury so that they wouldn't have to cut health, education, and social services to the provinces.

Canadian Pacific, for example, has almost \$2 billion worth of uncollected corporate taxes — deferred. What would that mean to the province of Saskatchewan and to other Canadian provinces when they're struggling to maintain their human

services? It would mean a whole lot, Mr. Speaker. That's \$2 billion in deferred taxes from one corporate citizen.

And the cuts to the Saskatchewan health, education, and social services, was 114 million. Imagine what those \$2 billion worth of uncollected corporate taxes for Canadian Pacific alone would mean for all of Canada's provinces. It's no wonder though that the federal government doesn't have these priorities straight.

This same issue, the April '96 issue of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' *Monitor*, indicates that the Liberals federally got \$6 million from corporations in '94 as political contributions, even though 1994 was not an election year. And we all know the old adage that he or she who pays the piper calls the tune.

It's little wonder then that the Centre for Canadian Policy Alternatives indicates that the Liberal Party, quote: is the party of big business. The Liberal Party is the party most dependent on corporate financing. Even though it wasn't an election year, almost \$6 million worth of corporate contributions into their political fund-raising efforts.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this means, because the federal government, the federal Liberal Party, has made very conscious and deliberate decisions not to collect corporate taxes, that Saskatchewan people must back-fill health, education, and social services in this budget. And that programs like SECDAs must be cut.

In spite of this quandary or this dilemma that we find ourselves in, Mr. Speaker, this budget is a budget that meets the needs of Saskatchewan people and, more than that, honours the promises that the New Democratic Party made last June 21 when it was elected by the people of Saskatchewan.

In that election, Mr. Speaker, my party put out an election platform card that indicated that budget surpluses would be invested in three different ways. One-third would go for debt reduction; one-third would go for tax reduction; and one-third of any budget surplus would go for jobs, training, health care, and other services. And we called this a balanced approach to the surpluses that we pledged to the people of Saskatchewan.

And in spite of federal offloading, I say that this budget honours that commitment; brings a balanced perspective to government financing and to the working of government; honours the election pledge we made; and brings the Saskatchewan people not great tax relief or tax reductions, but modest tax reductions to the deficit reduction surtax, for example. Also to aviation fuel and some tax concessions targeted to the interprovincial truckers.

It's not great shakes, Mr. Speaker, but it's a beginning. It's a studious, careful, measured program of tax reductions, not across the board, but targeted in such a way as not to jeopardize our financial stability, but also, on the positive side, to increase job creation. And incidentally, there are no tax increases in this budget for individuals, families, or small businesses. An honouring of the election commitment for tax reduction in modest, responsible fashion.

Now I think of a year ago, Mr. Speaker, and the election promise that was made by the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan — a promise that the sales tax would be reduced to 5 per cent. And I quote from their election program paper:

This strategy will start by reducing sales tax from the NDP 9 per cent to 5 per cent in the first term of a Liberal government. This requires a replacement for up to \$340 million in lost revenues.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan didn't believe this promise. It was patently absurd that the province could have its cake and eat it too; that we could sustain a 4 per cent reduction in the provincial sales tax at a cost of \$340 million in lost revenues, when it was difficult enough this year to sustain a loss of \$114 million from the federal government.

I say that the election promises that we made last year for modest tax reduction, for debt reduction, and for improved jobs training and health care services, were responsible and believable promises, and those are the promises we continue to act on in this budget.

This budget keeps jobs and economic growth a top priority. It protects the province's core services from the detrimental effects of federal transfer payments. It streamlines government; it insists on delivering government services more economically and better — efficiently. And it also continues sound financial management by being a balanced budget and by paying down debt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to spend a moment talking about this budget's commitment to health care. We have a strong commitment to health care in the New Democratic Party, as evidenced by this budget and by the back-filling of \$47 million in federal cuts to health care. Health spending is now at one and a half billion in the province of Saskatchewan. It's the same that it was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year; it's not an increase in funding for health care.

But we did manage to back-fill \$47 million worth of federal cuts to preserve the level of funding that we have for health care in our province. And we made up for the full reduction in federal funding for health care. Funding for health care districts is maintained at its current level for '96-97 and for '97-98.

One of the reasons we're able to do this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is because we are moving away from past, inefficient funding patterns based on bricks and mortar and facilities, to funding based on people — population characteristics and the services that people need. Health renewal is working on this principle of putting people first.

Since 1991 and '92, spending on home care and community services has been expanded by \$47 million — that's the amount that was cut by the federal government this year — \$47 million over the last four years for home care and for community services, and this is saving millions of dollars in hospital costs annually. And people are getting better care because of it.

In 1991, prior to health renewal, Saskatchewan's health system

was focused far too much on institutions and not the needs of real people. We had in the province of Saskatchewan more hospitals than any other province in Canada except Ontario, and more hospital beds per person than any other province. Today we have 77 hospitals.

In 1991 over 13 per cent of all residents over the age of 75 were living in nursing homes, a higher percentage or proportion than all but two provinces in Canada. In 1991 we had over 400 — 400 — health boards, resulting in fragmented delivery of health care services. Today we have 30 health districts which have improved coordination and planning for health services and reduced administrative costs. And these reduced administrative costs are savings that are going directly into the funding of home care and community care programs.

In 1991, because of the 400 health boards, we had high administration and facility costs that were growing out of control. Today we have a new system of funding for health services, which is being phased in across the province, to allocate resources among health districts in a way that is equitable and fair and based on the services they provide to the people of the districts and the demographics of the districts and health needs in the districts.

(1500)

Spending, in a word, has been stabilized. We've cut the unnecessary expenditures from the health care system and we've been able to provide better service at the same time. Procedures in high demand such as cataract removal, knee and hip replacements, coronary bypasses, have increased from 1991-92 to the present time. Cataract surgeries have increased by 25 per cent; hip and knee replacements by 12 per cent; coronary bypass surgery has increased by 9 per cent. And we've been able to meet that high demand because of the re-allocation of resources, and not introduce prolonged waiting-lists at the same time.

A number of other procedures have seen decreases in the last four years. Caesarean sections have been decreased by 16 per cent and tonsillectomies by 27 per cent. And research done by the Saskatchewan health utilization board has shown that our utilization of these services in Saskatchewan was higher than in other provinces. We've done something about that. We're saving money and putting money into services that people really need.

I'm talking about services that people really need. Home care services have increased by 38 per cent in the last four years. And believe it or not, Saskatchewan now spends slightly more per person on health care today than it did in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch just for a moment on post-secondary funding since this is so important to my constituency which includes the University of Saskatchewan. A \$15 million cut from the federal government to post-secondary education in Saskatchewan, and \$11 million of that cut back-filled by provincial taxpayers. What about the \$4 million that wasn't back-filled? That was for capital expenditures, Mr. Speaker. And the decision was made that we can defer those

capital costs at the university level and at the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) level, but we cannot defer funding for the operational costs of our institutions, and that operational funding will stay at the present level, given the present budget.

Social Services — a \$52 million hit or cut from the federal government. But the Minister of Social Services has indicated that that \$52 million cut will be back-filled by this budget so that the most vulnerable in our society will be protected. And part of this will be done by redesigning our social services system.

It was a former vice-president, Hubert Humphrey, in the United States who said, quote:

. . . the moral test of government is how . . . (it) treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the . . . (aged); and those who are in the shadows of life — the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

That is the moral test of government, says Hubert Humphrey: how it treats those who are most vulnerable, how it honours its social responsibility to all of its citizens.

Two days ago the Canada Health and Social Transfer program became a moral test for the federal Government of Canada. The Canada Health and Social Transfer yesterday replaced the former Canada assistance program, and with the end of the Canada assistance program goes all national standards on social assistance. We took a giant step backward in Canada with the end of the Canada Assistance Plan.

The new Canada Health and Social Transfer program that came into effect yesterday will not protect the social assistance and social services portion of transfers from being swallowed up by provincial governments whose spending priorities are health and education or other areas other than social services.

This change will not make provincial governments accountable any longer for how they spend federal funding under the Canada Health and Social Transfer program. Neither will it make them accountable for what social service and social assistance standards they set in their jurisdictions. Neither will it compel provinces to do anything. Effectively the federal government is getting out of setting national standards for provinces in health and social services and leaving the door wide open for right-wing reactionaries or reformers to cut from social assistance and from those who need the support of society.

This transfer of responsibility ignores the different capacities and financial circumstances of individual provinces and does nothing to promote equality in social services across the country. It does nothing to contribute to a national framework of agreed-upon economic and social objectives. And it does not protect or safeguard or promote national social values by even articulating them or attempting to articulate them.

This is a sad day, Mr. Speaker, for poor people in our country

— the day after this transfer of federal responsibility to the provinces. I'm pleased though to say that in the province of Saskatchewan, and with this provincial budget, we are honouring our commitment to pass the moral test of government, as Hubert Humphrey called it, to protect those who are in the dawn of life or in the twilight of life or in the shadows of life.

And we are doing that with this back-fill budget, targeting the scarce resources that we have to those programs that are most important to the people of Saskatchewan. And if the federal government won't uphold its responsibility to national standards and if the federal government won't engage in tax reform and tax the corporate sector for their deferred \$40 billion in uncollected corporate taxes and if the federal government won't protect the Canada Assistance Plan, this Government of Saskatchewan will do those things in our jurisdiction.

And not only will we protect those programs, Mr. Speaker, we will balance our budgets as we do them. And that is why I will support this budget even though I have some problems with some of the facets of it in particular. I have a far bigger problem with the priorities of the federal government and what it's doing, forcing us to make these difficult decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to rise today to make some comments with respect to the budget address of Thursday last and of course the contents of the Minister of Finance's budget which apply to the fiscal year 1996-1997.

On budget day, Mr. Speaker, we watched as the minister and the members opposite, along with their spin doctors, attempting to sell the people of Saskatchewan another bill of goods. My colleague, the hon. member for Thunder Creek, referred to the budget as the blaming budget. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what we have heard from the Premier on down through the ranks to the most junior members of the back benches on the members opposite.

For months we have heard them blame Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. For years while in opposition and since they came to power in 1991, these masters of illusion have blamed others, including the previous Conservatives, for the difficulties and the pain that they have inflicted upon the Saskatchewan people. And yes, Mr. Speaker, the members of the third party, no matter how you cut it, have to continue to accept responsibility for the way in which they plundered the provincial treasury and now have the unmitigated gall to sit in this Chamber and preach fiscal responsibility. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that those members are not in the Assembly today to hear some of these remarks . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the member will be aware I believe, that the rules of the Assembly do not permit him to refer to either the presence or the absence of members of the Assembly. I'll ask him to withdraw that unparliamentary remark and to continue his debate.

Mr. McLane: — I'll adhere to that ruling, Mr. Speaker, and will do that.

I will just repeat that the members of the third party must accept responsibility for some of the things that they have done to the provincial treasury and to the people of this province and then again to sit in this Chamber and preach fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I was amazed to see the comments of the Leader of the Third Party, the hon. member from Kindersley, that the budget was, and I quote: better than a kick in the head. And they praised the government for its fiscal responsibility. Well, Mr. Speaker, it isn't surprising, coming from that member, who isn't able to decide whether he is an engineer or a welder, that he would make such a comment.

Mr. Speaker, the people of rural Saskatchewan were not particularly happy to see that member of the legislature for Kindersley, the Leader of the Third Party, fail to stand up for the people of rural Saskatchewan again. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the people I have spoken with over the past number of days from all across this province have been appalled at the Leader of the Third Party in his comments, that while rural areas will suffer job losses as a result of the budget, they are not large enough to put rural Saskatchewan, and I quote, a significant peril.

Mr. Speaker, today in the news we heard some quotes regarding this Liberal caucus and the third party. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, to the members here today that the members of the third party are flattering themselves in thinking that there would be anybody from this side that would join them.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, as you've heard from a number of our caucus colleagues today, that I will not be entertaining any discussions with the third party — and I have not, Mr. Speaker. And I want the people of Arm River to be aware of that. I was elected as a Liberal, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to represent them and be part of the official opposition from Arm River.

Mr. Speaker, one has to ask a couple of questions. Are the comments of the Leader of the Third Party an expression of gratitude to the Premier and his party for propping up the Conservative leader and his party in the provincial election? Or is he and his party so out of touch with reality, which I think is the truth, that they just don't see what is happening in rural Saskatchewan? In fact they don't see what is happening throughout our province.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I are not surprised at comments like this coming from a welder who purports to be an engineer.

Mr. Speaker, the anger that rural people have for the lack of support in the Leader of the Third Party is only surpassed by the anger and the sense of betrayal that Saskatchewan people feel at the hands of the members opposite, particularly the Premier and his right hand, the Minister of Finance.

A few short months ago, Mr. Speaker, the voters were treated to a glitzy Phoenix Advertising program that featured the Premier

longingly looking out his office window at the dawning of a new day; after subjecting the people of this province to an unprecedented hacking and slashing of our health programs, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker; to unprecedented cuts in services; to unprecedented offloading to the municipalities; to unprecedented increases in utility rates that would provide part of the revenue to balance the books; to unprecedented increases in both staffing and salaries to the Premier's Executive Council staff. And, Mr. Speaker, the list could go on and on.

We continually watched and listened to the Premier declaring the pain is now over. We now begin to start the building and money will be available to build, going into the new century. We keep talking about going into the new century, Mr. Speaker.

I recall during the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, the NDP candidate in our riding, that I ran against — who ran a good campaign — in Hanley, Saskatchewan, when we had an all-candidates' meeting, Mr. Speaker; he talked about, the pain is over. He talked about his Premier and what they were going to do, how the hurt was over, how there would be no more cuts.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the pain is not over. And of course it's just another broken promise, a series of broken promises, Mr. Speaker, much as happened back in 1992 with the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program.

The pain is now over; we will begin to build, he said over and over again. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has always talked about flip-flopping. Now let's look at the record of this government in the past nine months.

Balancing the budget for farmers, \$188 million of GRIP money before the election. Reneging on the promise not to collect the GRIP overpayments. Reneging on revenue sharing with the municipalities of the VLT (video lottery terminal) revenue. Secret contract for casino operations. And contracts when we were promised open government.

Mr. Speaker, we now know that the Premier was not looking longingly to the future. He was in fact looking out the window at growing line-ups at the food banks that he and his government promised to eradicate. Another broken promise, Mr. Speaker, simply rolling the dice.

He was looking out the window at the growing number of people seeking hospital and nursing home care, which we now see will only be further aggravated by the cuts in funding to institutional care in this budget. Mr. Speaker, another broken promise.

Mr. Speaker, if we look to an article in the *Leader-Post* of weeks past with the headline, "Democracy or dictatorship", Mr. Speaker, we see an issue of the Plains Health Centre where we are going to be closing an institution in Regina and consolidating to two, Mr. Speaker; where we cannot possibly provide the services and the access to our people of southern

Saskatchewan, in particular our seniors, Mr. Speaker, who will have an extreme difficulty in driving to access services at either one of the two existing hospitals in downtown Regina. Mr. Speaker, one of the advantages of the Plains Health Centre is its location and its accessibility to the people of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland mentioned that he who pays the piper plays the tune. Well exactly, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what has happened here. The provincial government pays the piper, and they dictate to the districts what they should do.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote just a couple of items from this article if I might where they talk about, the question is, is the closure of the Plains Health Centre based on sound economic analysis. And the answer is no: on this issue there has never been an independent benefit/cost study done. Mr. Speaker, we're just wondering if we're moving into a new era into the year 2000 in the dark or if the Premier really did shed some light through his open window.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier was looking out the window in search of a new spin doctor to elegantly present bad news with sugar coating. And as reported by the *Leader-Post*, found a radio-talk host, a friend, to add to his already overinflated staff at another 70,000-plus. A promise to cut at the top? Well, Mr. Speaker, another broken promise.

Another broken promise, Mr. Speaker, as he was looking out the window at the growing list of welfare recipients who, because their government has failed in job creation, must now look unfortunately to the state for their sustenance. Eradication of poverty with thousands of new jobs? Well, Mr. Speaker, that too is another broken promise.

Where is the dignity for these people that want to find a job, Mr. Speaker, and unable to because of wasteful spending such as Crown tendering projects and contracts in this province, Mr. Speaker, that relate to hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

Mr. Speaker, he was looking out the window at a new casino that would serve as another source of taxation to balance his budget and all the while thinking, what would Tommy Douglas think. What would Tommy Douglas think? Good question for the members opposite to ask. Well, Mr. Speaker, I call this budget "rolling the dice" in the theme with the government's casinos and gambling role in the last two or three years. Why do I call it that? Because it rolls the dice with respect to our financial future, Mr. Speaker, our financial abilities to sustain those social programs that are so near and dear to all our hearts, and the ones that Tommy Douglas talked about and initiated. And it rolls the dice with respect to the lives of our people, Mr. Speaker.

Before the Minister of Finance and the members opposite damage their arms any further from patting themselves on the back, let me remind the members opposite how the roll of the dice will affect this budget and our financial future. For those members opposite, indeed for all of us, I want to draw your

attention to an article by Dale Eisler entitled "Gambling revenues now a major factor." Mr. Eisler writes:

If the Romanow government says it isn't addicted to gambling money, you have to assume it's probably, as they say at Gamblers Anonymous, because it's in a state of denial (Mr. Speaker).

I think that the government is in a state of denial, and if you look back to the history of some of the members opposite in their former lives when the discussion of gambling and casinos in the province was at the forefront, we know full well that many of them certainly did not support this concept. And I'm just wondering today if their mind is changed or if they've been coerced into doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eisler goes on to say:

Gambling revenue is now more than twice the 50 million the provincial treasury will receive as a dividend payment from all the province's Crown corporations.

An extreme amount of money, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Eisler goes on to say:

The spectacular growth in gambling revenues began two years ago with the introduction of VLTs which brought in a breathtaking 95 million in its first year, well ahead of the 75 million estimated in the '94-95 budget. Last year VLT money added 95 million to provincial coffers.

Just think, Mr. Speaker. The millions of dollars that are being dragged out of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, small towns where people are pounding their money into VLT machines, people in many cases that cannot afford it. Mr. Speaker, the member from Eastview knows full well what happens to the social impact, to people, when they're wasting their money on gambling.

Mr. Speaker, in our small communities services are suffering, Mr. Speaker. Recreational services are suffering. There is only so much money, Mr. Speaker, to go around in the form of recreation. And when the people have used that up by pounding it through the VLT machines, there's little left for the local bingos, for the local fowl suppers, for all those activities that are so near and dear to rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eisler concludes by saying:

Of that total, the government expects 110 million to come from the approximately 4,000 VLTs in the province, an additional 8.4 million in profits from the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation realized on the first year of casino operation.

Mr. Speaker, an extremely large amount of money that's going through our gambling operations in the province.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take any fiscal ingenuity to collect gambling money, renege on sharing, and use it to balance the budget — very simple. The windfall gambling of \$120 million

this year more than offsets the \$114 million those members opposite have cried about for so long that they're losing from the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Is this government rolling the dice? I'm afraid so.

And they don't even blink. That's the amazing part, Mr. Speaker. We're dealing with people's lives from across the province. We're talking about people being addicted to gambling; we're talking about people losing their jobs, their livelihoods, and nobody seems to care, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Maybe the mice are blind mice.

Mr. McLane: — That's a possibility. As the hon. member points out from Wood River, that sometimes people turn a blind eye to things that they're not too fussy about, as I mentioned earlier, as many of these members certainly were not in days gone by in favour of gambling and casinos.

Mr. Speaker, when we began to plan the future of our social programs based on gambling revenues, we are really seeing this government roll the dice. And they're rolling the dice, Mr. Speaker, with our lives and the sustainability of these very programs that we're so concerned about — our social programs, our health, education, our . . . the lives of our families, the lives of all the members' children as we move into the future of Saskatchewan. I'm a little afraid that as we look into the new century, Mr. Speaker, that we will be a shrinking population in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed a shameful approach in the government's handling of budget news leading up to the budget speech. The fearmongering by this government that our leader made reference to the other day was certainly a classic example of rolling the dice.

You roll the dice with the lives of the front-line people — front-line workers, Mr. Speaker. These very people who provide services to our citizens, whether it be in health care, whether it be in educational services, whether it be in highways, whether it's municipal services, Mr. Speaker. And the list, again, could go on and on.

Front-line hospital workers, nurses, technicians, teachers, highway workers, the people who make government work, have endured a hell on earth with the taunting by their government. Morale and pride have been so damaged by the contradictory message these members opposite, and their spin doctors, that they have spread, that one has to wonder if we will ever be able to restore confidence in not only our programs . . .

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you and to the members of the Assembly, two distinguished gentlemen in your gallery up here, Mr. Lindsay Clark and Fred Strelieff of CEP (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union). They're in the House today watching the proceedings and making contact with members. So I'd like everyone to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just so we get the full effect of my last thought, I'll go back to the beginning of the paragraph. So we don't want the members opposite to miss out on that. Or I could go back further if the members opposite would like me to.

An Hon. Member: — I think they wanted you to start over.

Mr. McLane: — Start over? Front-line workers is what we were talking about, Mr. Speaker, whether it's nurses, technicians, teachers, the highway workers, the people who make government work, have endured a hell on earth with the taunting by their government. Morale and pride have been so damaged by the contradictory messages that these members opposite and their spin doctors have spread, that one has to wonder if we will ever be able to restore confidence in not only our programs but in the thousands of fine, dedicated people that this government appears not to worry a hoot about.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier and the Minister of Finance to quit rolling the dice with the lives of our people of Saskatchewan.

For months we heard the Premier whine and cry about federal government offloading, as if they had just learned about the changes in revenue sharing, and once again, Mr. Speaker, we heard it again today from the members opposite. All of us know, Mr. Speaker, that while the Premier was longingly gazing out that window and was promising no more cuts and that the pain was over, that he knew well what he had to do and what had to be done. And if he didn't, well that raises a whole new dimension, Mr. Speaker. Again this Premier and those members opposite were rolling the dice.

Mr. Speaker, while creating an atmosphere of fear and tension leading up to the budget, the Premier and the minister knew that they could not deliver the bad news to hospitals, to the universities, to the municipalities in this budget, for after all the Premier, the member from Riversdale, had promised no more pain — no more pain — in fact a promise of building. So roll the dice, bring down the budget in a manner which would have

our people say, thank goodness it wasn't so bad as we thought, Mr. Premier.

Well it had the effect on the Leader of the Third Party, that's for sure, Mr. Speaker. Again, he said, it was better than a kick in the head, but we could expect that from someone who doesn't quite know the difference between a welder and an engineer, Mr. Speaker.

The government rolled the dice in a manner that reminds me of the story of a question being directed to a fellow who had been banging his head on a concrete wall. When asked why he continued to bang his head on the wall, he replied, because it feels so good when I quit. Mr. Speaker, I think that's an analogy of this budget.

This government, Mr. Speaker, continued to bang their heads on the fearful fiscal wall so that when they quit it would feel so good for us. I think the members opposite have felt that somewhat themselves when they look at some of the things that have happened in their constituencies as well.

Mr. Speaker, the people haven't been fooled by the smoke and mirror approach. The masters of illusion, Mr. Speaker, haven't fooled the people of Saskatchewan. Members will have heard me say a number of times as we move through the legislation process that the devil is in the detail, when referring to the regulations. Well the devil is in the detail and the pain of this budget is only beginning to start.

In what detail? What will be worse? Well, Mr. Speaker, I would predict, when in rolling the dice, this government will have to defend its offloading in answering to the individual departmental budgets that we will be pursuing in the days ahead with a fine-toothed comb.

As I look over this whole budget, Mr. Minister, not even the government's over-inflated, over-paid communication spin doctors will be able to fool Saskatchewan citizens much longer. The Minister of Finance and her colleagues seem to take great pride in announcing that funding would be maintained for our social programming in health, education, and social services.

(1530)

But, Mr. Speaker, let's just take a minute here and have a look at health, Mr. Speaker. Stable funding at today's level just doesn't cut it. And the members opposite and the current funding has seen district board difficulties virtually across the piece. The members opposite, particularly the member from the Regina constituencies and particularly the member from Regina Wascana Plains, who as the Chair of the government caucus committee on health had a hand in leading up to the decimation in health services in Regina, well she will know full well that the Regina board has a \$1.6 million deficit and has virtually no reserves left to draw on.

Mr. Speaker, stable funding means another \$1.6 million deficit coupled with an inflation factor of 3 per cent in yet unsettled contracts. Mr. Speaker, we have no idea what the government will be offering to the unions, the health unions, in their

contract talks that were delayed some months before the budget was brought down.

One can only expect, Mr. Speaker, that the reasoning for these delays was simply to delay those costs in the budget, and that the health districts will have to pick up these costs down the road, Mr. Speaker. The net result, Mr. Speaker, could well mean an 8 to 10 per cent cut to health care spending over all. Mr. Speaker, no small feat. That's a new word.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the health districts are ill equipped to pick up any further costs within their budget. Mr. Speaker, we all know that the health districts are to the max. They're all in a deficit position; they all have massive deficits, Mr. Speaker, and yet we continue to pile it on. One would wonder where it's going to stop.

Mr. Speaker, Madam Finance Minister and the Health minister apply that across the province, and you have a prescription for disaster. And you have the courage to suggest that you plan to maintain this stable funding over the next two years? Well thank God you didn't admit to cutting, because with this kind of math, our health system couldn't afford it. Just think if we would have had it increased, Mr. Speaker.

The front-line workers in our hospitals, long-term care facilities, and rehab centres will not be pleased with your ongoing assault on beds and those services, as we see yet another significant cut to funding coming in this areas.

You decrease home-based services . . . you increase home-based services by a mere \$4.2 million, Mr. Speaker, but you are a long way from being able to provide home care services to offset the horrendous cuts to hospital service, in particularly in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Health has looked at the vast expanses in rural Saskatchewan where services are needed — where home care services are needed for the people in the country. I wonder if the Minister of Health knows, Mr. Speaker, what it costs to send workers two and three and four times a day to rural residents living on farms some 10 or 15 miles from an urban centre, and as far as 30 or 40 miles from the people that provide the service. Mr. Speaker, when we look at \$4.2 million, I don't think it will go very far in providing those services to our rural residents.

Mr. Speaker, this is only another example of a broken promise, and yes, rolling the dice again. This government will have to answer for the closing of more beds in rural Saskatchewan. It will have to answer for the closing of the Plains Health Centre which will, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the Minister of Health's claims, result in fewer beds crammed into two inaccessible hospitals for our rural people, two hospitals that will not be able to be accessed by our elderly seniors from rural Saskatchewan who can barely drive to the Plains hospital, which is convenient for them.

Mr. Speaker, they continue to roll the dice. But, Mr. Minister, let me warn you. This member and this caucus will stand up for rural Saskatchewan as we have in the past month and hold you

accountable for any further erosion to our health services in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if we can, let us look at education. The Minister of Education has promised a 2 per cent increase, but of course that was election rhetoric. And what do we see? A .6 increase or \$2 million with a promise for a further increase or \$900,000 or a .25 per cent in the next year — another broken promise, Mr. Speaker. And I ask the question, can education profit from this generosity? And what about inflation and the cost of new salaries, as I mentioned with health, Mr. Speaker? Another burden on the back of our education boards in the province, Mr. Speaker, simply rolling the dice.

Mr. Speaker, the education system is told it will benefit from the government's kindness by 2.9 million over two years. But whoops, if I have to take back 7 million in school administration in 1998-1999, I guess it's welcome to the dawning of a new day, Mr. Speaker, another broken promise, another rolling of the dice.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that our member from Canora-Pelly will have more to say in his approach to the budget, and I won't take up much more time on education, Mr. Speaker, except that you would wonder that the Premier took . . . we all wondered why the Premier took post-secondary education away from the former minister. We thought it was to create a job for a friend, but now perhaps we have the real reason.

I would also at this time, Mr. Speaker, like to congratulate the Minister for Post-Secondary Education, in the budget debate last night in his speech where he kind of laid out and explained the process of post-secondary education, what's happening with the universities, and with post-secondary education, and I very much appreciate that. And I hope that the minister realizes that.

I'd also like to point out to the minister that we are concerned about our post-secondary, our SIAST, where our people are finding schooling that puts them in touch with jobs that the province has, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes our educational system, I think, is wrapped up in tradition and history and fails to recognize the changes that occur in the province in the areas of jobs; that we must remember that we have to educate our young people so that they come out of school, whether it's from the institutes or from the universities, that they're in the position that there's jobs for them, Mr. Speaker.

Just speaking of post-secondary education once again, Mr. Speaker, the smoke and the mirrors, the masters of illusion try to tell us that all is well by maintained current levels of funding, but I think that the government is promising to cut another 10 million from the operating budgets in '98-99. And you know, we'll have to find out of that as well, the patronage appointments again of the \$11,000 a month, Mr. Speaker, which could have well gone toward educating a student to get them ready for the workforce.

What about the capital costs cuts of \$4.6 million, Mr. Speaker? What about the leaking roofs and the inability to maintain the building infrastructure at our universities — something else, Mr. Speaker, that we're not considering.

And while the new Minister of Post-Secondary Education has little more money to administer and justify his new department, he at least admits that SIAST still has a problem. I was happy to hear that again last night, Mr. Speaker, that the minister does recognize there is a problem.

And we will want assurances that the programs that create these job opportunities will not be axed, as I earlier talked about, and that will be made more accessible. And with their government record of broken promises, we won't be holding our breath while the government rolls the dice once again, Mr. Speaker, but we will be after the government and the minister opposite to ensure that those programs are not axed.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have become very aware of the devastation of our highway infrastructure. This all began by the former Tory administration of course, and is accelerated by the lack of concern and the lack of action of this new Romanow government and the Romanow government of the past four years.

We all remember the days when the former Minister of Highways. . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I think it may have just slipped out, and the hon. member may not have realized, but he knows that the rule of the Assembly does not provide the use of proper names of members who are currently seated in the Assembly, and I'll simply ask him to honour that rule of the Assembly.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly was a slip there, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad that we picked up on that.

Very well, Mr. Speaker, we all remember the day when the former minister of Highways, the hon. member for Rosetown, promised to turn our highways back to upgraded gravel. Public pressure, of course, forced a recanting, or should I say another flip-flop by the minister of the day in the NDP government . . .

An Hon. Member: — That was only Arm River though.

Mr. McLane: — Yes, I believe the member opposite is right. That did happen in the constituency of Arm River last summer, Mr. Speaker, where Highway No. 44 began to be turned back to gravel and for a period of time of about a week the road was impassable, Mr. Speaker, and was closed. So we all know what happens when the government's commitment to highways is not there. And I thank the member opposite for reminding me of that.

But, Mr. Speaker, what they said they wouldn't do, they have done by way of the back door one more time. All of us remember, all of us remember well, the howling of the NDP opposition when a Tory Highway minister, the hon. member from Wilkie — who members of the third party will remember, of course, but wish they could forget, I might add — said he was transferring some 500 highway workers to the private sector.

We saw our highways equipment sold off at bargain prices to

Tory friends and out-of-province contractors, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure we all remember that. Well, Mr. Speaker, in this budget, the Minister of Finance, aided and abetted by her colleague, the Minister of Highways, has continued that transfer of workers to the private sector — some 170 employees to be precise.

The Minister of Finance tells us that this will save us about 5.6 million, and this, with a paltry \$700,000 added to this year's operation budget, will be used to pay for what the Minister of Highways terms a variety of construction and resurfacing projects.

The Minister of Highways proudly boasted the other day that — and I quote:

This budget reflects the government's commitment to preserving our highways and to streamlining our operations.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think the people of Saskatchewan really believe in the streamlining process and I'd like to quote from a letter from the community of Elbow. The letter is addressed to the Minister of Highways and is copied to the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Tourism Authority and is also copied to the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Arm River.

The letter, Mr. Speaker, is from the mayor of Elbow. The letter starts out, and I quote:

The municipal council in the village of Elbow is very concerned with the continuing deterioration of Highway No. 19 from our town north to the junction of Highway No. 15.

The mayor goes on to say . . . and I might add, Mr. Speaker, that the highway is in a deplorable state. And we all know the resort area of Elbow and Lake Diefenbaker, and I know full well that many of the members opposite travel there to golf and to partake in the surroundings and the lake as well.

So they know full well what the condition of Highway No. 19 is like. And I hope the Minister of Highways will take note of this and put some thought and effort into what the people of Elbow and area are asking.

The mayor of Elbow, Mr. Speaker, goes on to say:

In these difficult economic times, there are more and more services being relocated from rural areas to urban centres. Each time this happens, it makes rural residents more dependent on our highways. They are an essential service acting as our connection to health, to education, and every service that Saskatchewan residents are proud to claim as our right to have. Action in this matter is necessary immediately.

(1545)

Mr. Speaker, I have met with these people from the Elbow and surrounding areas, and they have talked to me about their plight

and the phone calls that they're getting from disgruntled tourists in the summertime. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's imperative that action is taken.

And I'll just sum up with the last paragraph of the request from the people of Elbow and surrounding area:

On behalf of the residents of the village of Elbow, I respectfully request that you instruct your department to upgrade Highway No. 19 from Elbow north to the No. 15 junction.

And it's signed by the mayor of Elbow, Mr. Speaker.

I think that we've heard now for some number of weeks leading up to the budget, Mr. Speaker, this government talking about their consultation process and talking to the people. Here's the people asking if the government is interested in listening to a major problem out there, Mr. Speaker.

And I would respectfully ask that the members opposite, including the Minister of Highways, that they take seriously some of these concerns that are coming in from rural Saskatchewan. I know the minister will be happy to look after that highway for us.

That's only one indication, Mr. Speaker, of the plight of the people in rural Saskatchewan from within my constituency. I know it doesn't vary a great deal from across the province. The roads are in horrendous condition almost everywhere you go. I'm sure the members opposite that live in the rural areas are hearing much the same thought and comments from their constituents. And it's a problem that I think the government neglected in their budget, budget consultations, and in their budget thoughts and the budget itself.

Mr. Speaker, I really wonder how this minister and this government can streamline a department that has already been decimated and has faced an undaunting task of trying to simply keep up with the gravelling and the maintenance of our highways. Hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of highway infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, is deteriorating almost as we stand here and with no long-term plan or thought of how to address this problem.

I've heard the members opposite talk for the last six or seven months again about the federal downloading and, Mr. Speaker, they've raised the issue of the demise of the Crow. I have consistently stated in this House, as well as outside it, that we need a long-term plan, and that the roads were in a deplorable state long before July 31, 1995 when the Crow was discontinued.

And yet we still do not have a long-term plan, Mr. Speaker, to address this. I wonder how the government and the minister opposite can not address it in a budget when we know full well that the situation on our highways is going to deteriorate daily with increased traffic on it.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask what this streamlining involves. I guess, in my view, it involves the closure of about 26

maintenance depots — of course all of them in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And you know, it's another hit on rural Saskatchewan and the safety of the people of rural Saskatchewan who, I mentioned earlier, have to use these roads for almost everything, whether it's health, education services, Mr. Speaker, or whether it's recreation or what have you.

As these depots are closed, of course, we see the highway workers, the maintenance workers, having to drive further and further to work to get to the places to maintain the roads. And especially in the winter-time, Mr. Speaker, that does cause a peril for the people travelling these roads if the workers aren't at hand to ensure that the safety aspect of our highways is looked after.

Also involved in the closure of these offices, Mr. Speaker . . . and I asked in the House yesterday of the members opposite and the Minister of Highways if there had been any study done to see what the cost and the significant savings on this would actually be. Because you have to realize that as we're closing more offices, these workers are further and further from their work. The time involved for them to get work, of course, is eating away at the already slim budget that the Highways department has. And I just wonder if the Minister of Finance, in consultation with the Minister of Highways, really looked at that aspect of it and realizes the amount of dollars that will be wasted in actual closing of those offices.

The minister says that these savings will help the department re-pave 209 kilometres of existing road. I guess that begs the question as well, Mr. Speaker, are we saying that we're throwing safety out the window for the people using those highways in order that we can build some roads somewhere else, Mr. Speaker, in light of the disastrous situation that our highways are in. I don't think that's what the people of the province want to see — the safety put in jeopardy just because we need to build some roads otherwise. The government again of course has made a choice, and in my estimation a poor choice and the wrong one.

I guess I'd have to say as well, Mr. Speaker, that I think it was the same minister that mocked and made light of the federal government's grant from the Crow rate, the transition payments, I think when he said that it would only re-pave you about 150 kilometres of highway. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, how quickly the minister changes his tune. And we'll be watching, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that this government and the Minister of Highways doesn't simply try and take that federal money and use it to patch up highways that they should have looked after over the last four or five years and try and use it for that.

We need new highways. The municipalities of course need this money to upgrade their infrastructure. We all know what happens, Mr. Speaker, when our highways are to a point where our truckers are reluctant to travel on them any more; that they move on to the municipalities' sections of the road that they have to maintain and of course pound those out and just really transfer the cost from the province to the individual municipalities.

As the Highways critic, I guess I raise the concern about getting the SaskPower employees to repair the lines in stormy weather. Now we find out that it will take another 30 minutes to an hour, I guess, to get some roads in winter storms cleared off, Mr. Speaker. And I'm just wondering, out today, what would happen if some of our ministers were out on the roads today, Mr. Speaker, looking at them and seeing the deplorable state that they're probably in because of the lack of commitment by this government to look after our provincial highways.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the rural people are put at a great risk, to say nothing of the travelling public. We've talked about the rural people who need to use these highways, but what about the people who are travelling through, our visitors coming from neighbouring provinces or from south of the border or what have you, or from the North, as we saw earlier today, Mr. Speaker. If they were subjected to travelling on some of these highways, how is their safety affected? I think, Mr. Speaker, it's just another matter of rolling the dice with the lives of the people and not only the ones in rural Saskatchewan, but all throughout Saskatchewan.

I'd like to remind the minister and the government in his office about the condition of our roads, the conditions that they would readily understand if the cabinet ministers didn't use the executive aircraft for their travels and chose to drive instead, I think would be a real challenge, Mr. Speaker, for some of the ministers to actually use those, and maybe the Minister of Highways. I'm not sure how much time he spends in the air but maybe he needs to spend a little bit more of it on the ground, and would realize some of the problems that we have.

Yes, one of the problems of course that we have today, with the Leader of the Official Opposition not being here, is that he is stranded in the North, in the snow in the northern part of the province. And because the crews aren't out there to get him here, unfortunately he's not able to partake in this, and I hope that the Minister of Highways will take some responsibility for that as well, for him not being here today.

If we look at a number of our highways, Mr. Speaker, we talk about whether it's Highway No. 19, or whether it's Highway 15, or whether it's Highway 44 we talked about was impassable last summer, or whether it's Highway No. 2, Mr. Speaker. I think that the members opposite know full well that our highways are in a deplorable state, Mr. Speaker.

We talked about our safety aspects, Mr. Speaker. It wouldn't be right if I didn't mention two of our main highways, No. 1 Highway, which has proved to be a safety . . .

An Hon. Member: — Is that a main highway?

Mr. McLane: — Well, it should be a main highway; it's the Trans-Canada Highway. But the lack of commitment by the provincial government to highways, certainly you would never know that, Mr. Speaker.

As well, we see many problems on Highway No. 16, Mr. Speaker, and the safety aspects in regards to that. We get many, many calls from people living up in that area that would like to

see something done to Highway No. 16 as well.

Mr. Speaker, if we could talk about closed hospitals for a minute, and a growing number of course are senior citizens in rural Saskatchewan. We have a crumbling highway system. We have depleted job opportunities, Mr. Speaker. We have closures of other services. And we're just wondering, what kind of a commitment is this to rural Saskatchewan? I don't believe that there is a commitment, but I would ask the members opposite, you know, what commitment is it? It seems to be aided by, again, the Leader of the Third Party, who said that this budget doesn't put Saskatchewan, or rural Saskatchewan, at significant peril.

Well, Mr. Speaker, is this the dawning of the new day? Maybe that yearful looking that the Premier had out the window was intended to see the return of the member for Kindersley — who either is a welder or an engineer; we're not sure — that supports this government in saying that this budget isn't that bad. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, how someone in rural Saskatchewan can make those kind of comments.

Mr. Speaker, in my maiden speech, I spoke of the need to maintain a strong agricultural community, and I said as the rural areas go, so go the urban areas. And that's a long-time saying, Mr. Speaker — so goes rural, so goes urban.

Agriculture of course is the mainstay of the economy of this province, and what do we see in this budget, Mr. Speaker? Yes, that's exactly right. You're thinking what I am — just another attack on rural Saskatchewan, just another rolling of the dice, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite realize that, as does the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

A quick look at this budget, Mr. Speaker, will point that out, as we see about \$50 million slashed from agriculture in this budget, \$50 million, Mr. Speaker, slashed from agriculture . . .

An Hon. Member: — When you slash, you make sure you give an opportunity for the Tories to respond.

Mr. McLane: — Thanks to the members opposite for recognizing the problem that we have with the third party.

With the loss of about 50 million, Mr. Speaker, in the agriculture budget, I just want to say that, you know, as part of that, we've seen the death of the Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, the loss of about 86 jobs. And I wonder, Mr. Speaker, how the member in this House, from Swift Current, explains that to his constituency. I would be interested in knowing if he went home on the past weekend to face the music, and I guess I know it would be a little tough for him to do that. But if the members fail to stand up and speak for rural Saskatchewan and on behalf of agriculture, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to see the hits on rural Saskatchewan in agriculture.

What is even more interesting is this government's sudden love-in with the banks, Mr. Speaker. For years, including the past few months, we have heard federal NDP members of parliament — and yes, of course, the members opposite —

decry the huge profits being made by the banks. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a policy of this NDP Party is to accept no contributions from the banks, and I just maybe would wonder now in light of this if that policy has changed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in a change of heart, these same people turn over student loan administration a week and a half ago to a large bank in the province. And now we have the agricultural loan policies and the administration to the very banking industry that they despise. It seems to me to be pretty hypocritical, but then again I guess let us remember that a New Democrat is a New Democrat is a New Democrat.

And so let's not hear, you know, their federal cousins crying in Ottawa about the banking industry and all the evils associated with it, Mr. Speaker.

(1600)

Mr. Speaker, the government here continues to criticize the federal government, but it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. They criticize the federal government on wherever they're making cuts. Many of the cuts that people across Canada are asking them to do, but many of the things that the federal is doing for Saskatchewan goes unnoticed, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd just like to quote, Mr. Speaker, from an article, if I could, Mr. Speaker, in regards to Macklin. And it talks about Macklin. The headline of the article, Mr. Speaker, is "Macklin is the big winner."

The town of Macklin is the big winner in a Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure works announcement on health care funding. About \$4.1 million will be spent there to construct a new facility that will house 22 long-term care beds, two for respite, palliative care, and two beds for observation, Mr. Speaker.

Also in Vanguard, it goes on to say that there's over half a million being spent to expand and renovate the existing health centre. Neilburg got a new \$808,000 health centre, Mr. Speaker. In Norquay, they'll be spending about \$600,000 to upgrade, all under the Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure works program, Mr. Speaker, something that the federal government has initiated. The members opposite fail to speak about all of those dollars that the federal government is pumping into Saskatchewan.

To go on to add, Mr. Speaker, we talked about agriculture, as I sometimes do. And I'd just like to mention some of the contributions that have been put into Saskatchewan from our federal counterparts who this government continues to run down.

Mr. Speaker, if we could just look at NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) for a minute and the federal contributions that they've put into Saskatchewan. If we look in 1994-1995, we see about just a little under \$24 million, Mr. Speaker. In '95-96, we've seen a whopping \$51.6 million, Mr. Speaker. And in 1996-97, we're going to see \$66.6 million, Mr. Speaker — no small amount of money going into our

agriculture sector, a commitment by the federal government to rural Saskatchewan.

If we talk about NISA enhanced program, Mr. Speaker, in '94-95 where we had \$36 million injected into our economy, Mr. Speaker; in '95-96, we've got 42 million, Mr. Speaker.

If we talk about NISA kick-start, Mr. Speaker, in '94-95, an additional 40 million; in '95-96, \$60 million. A lot of money, Mr. Speaker — a commitment from our federal government.

We talk about our crop sector companion program in 1995-96 of \$54.7 million; in 1996-97, \$104 million, Mr. Speaker. An enormous amount of money.

We've heard the government opposite talk about the agri-food innovation fund, Mr. Speaker. In '95-96, there was about \$4 million injected; in '96-97, 20 million; and in '97-98, Mr. Speaker, there will be \$40 million. This is a government that's willing to invest in the future of rural Saskatchewan and agriculture, something that our members opposite could learn a lesson from — a commitment to agriculture.

We look at crop insurance, Mr. Speaker. In '94-95, a little over \$67 million injected; '95-96, they had \$68 million on the table, and in '96-97, there will be some \$74 million, Mr. Speaker. A lot of money for rural Saskatchewan and agriculture.

Let's look at our cash advances for a minute, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government has seen fit to give to rural Saskatchewan and agriculture as well. In '94-95, we had about \$8 million, Mr. Speaker; and in '95-96, another 8.6; and in '96-97 projected, \$12.5 million, Mr. Speaker.

A lot of money, Mr. Speaker, injected into the rural economy and agriculture. A far cry from the provincial government who would rather ask for some \$12 million back from our already struggling farm economy, Mr. Speaker. That's what I call a commitment.

We look at our agricultural programs for this year, Mr. Speaker. Farmers are a little miffed out there as to what we will actually have for a crop insurance program, let alone another support program. Crop insurance, of course, has moved to the point where the farmers can't afford the premiums any longer and the return on their dollars is not worth having, so we have a program that is of little use, if any.

We have a crop sector program which has not been finalized yet, I understand, which the farmers will have no idea as to what kind of support they will be looking for or will be able to have. And given some of the perils that can happen in this province — hail-storms, drought, bug infections, grasshoppers, what have you — anything can happen, Mr. Speaker, and the people of this province that are involved in agriculture have no support whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member from Thunder Creek, the other day in the House said, and I quote: rural people should be outraged that economics rates above their well-being. And he is so right, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been economics that has driven health; it has driven the health reform from the start. Mr. Speaker, it's economics that now drives highway deterioration. Mr. Speaker, it's economics that begins to strangle agriculture, the backbone of Saskatchewan enterprise. It's economics that will see the horrendous cut-backs that will hit education in the next couple of years. And yes, it's economics that will erode our municipal governments, the closest to the people, the most sensitive to the people. And all in the name of what this government calls greater efficiency.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether we've heard it all, but we've heard a lot of it. We've got a provincial government that's talking about streamlining a local government that has proven without a shadow of a doubt over the last decades that they are an efficient government, Mr. Speaker. And as I get many calls on this subject and they all kind of end up with the same tone, that the provincial government should be looking to these local governments for some advice in following their example in balancing their budgets and doing what the people out there must do — hold the line, Mr. Speaker.

Even in this area, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, the minister, and the members are once again rolling the dice. The government has done its best in attempting to lull the municipalities into a sense of calm and complacency. And you know, Mr. Speaker, for a while I kind of thought they were maybe succeeding at it, given the quietness that was out there with both the rural and urban municipalities associations, and their members.

But again, Mr. Speaker, with the devil in the detail, municipal leaders are beginning to speak out. Sinclair Harrison, Mr. Speaker, the president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), said taxpayers in many communities will face, and again let me quote, a drastic millrate increase that could be as high as 20 per cent in some instances, Mr. Speaker. Harrison goes on to say that if the government thinks municipalities can save \$20 million in amalgamation, and I quote, they're dreaming technicolor.

Murray Westby, the president of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and a member of the Watrous constituency — and as well the John Deere dealer there who I do frequent once in awhile do some business with — labelled the reduction in the revenue-sharing gross as, and I quote : totally unacceptable. Mr. Westby went on to say it would be devastating, and that the budget is just the latest chapter in the story of senior governments passing their financial woes down onto other governments.

It all means, says Westby . . . all it means, says Westby, is that the province has dumped it on us. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Westby also slammed the government's decision to break its promise to provide a portion of VLT revenues to the municipal governments and other local agencies. Just another broken promise, Mr. Speaker.

Most important, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Westby said, and I quote: we are even more worried about loss of trust than the loss of money. Loss of trust, Mr. Speaker, that's what they're talking about here, is a lack of trust for the provincial government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, once again rolling the dice.

And on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Government has the audacity to declare — with a straight face I might add — it is significant the government has kept its commitment to municipalities that there would be no reduction in revenue sharing. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, as Winston Churchill would say, some commitment; some promise.

I asked that minister, what about inflation? We talked about the inflationary factor, Mr. Speaker, for health and for education; that certainly applies to municipalities as well. What about collective bargaining agreements that government has put on hold? And of course the ultimate cost of those settlements, Mr. Speaker, were not known yet. But not the same levels, Mr. Speaker, but a cut of at least 8 per cent in real dollars. Just another broken promise.

These institutions and these agencies in the health sector and education sector cannot take it, Mr. Speaker. Another broken promise; just rolling the dice once again with the people of Saskatchewan, who will see their property taxes increase because of their budget and because of reassessment.

The minister says, no new taxes. Well shake your heads and think again, folks, because there's lots of new taxes. But they're picked out of our pockets by other tax collectors because the provincial government legislates it to be so.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen our utilities go up, and over the last two years, Mr. Speaker, and of course since the election, Mr. Speaker. And finally, last . . . I guess it was this week, the member had the courage to come back, and because of extreme pressure from the people of the province, relax some of the rates in natural gas, Mr. Speaker. Much overdue, I might add.

Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders like the mayor of Regina, who incidentally are ardent supporters of this government, should surely be re-evaluating their support of this government. The mayor of Regina has indicated Regina's taxes will increase by 3 per cent because of his friends' actions — some friends, I guess, some assistance. The mayor decrees the lay-off which he predicts will take 10 million out of Regina's economy while throwing more and more money into Saskatoon, which is incidentally the home of the Premier and the Minister of Finance — conflict of interest maybe, favouritism. I believe the people will see this. And I think the mayor of Regina indicates that very well.

The minister, Mr. Speaker, boasts that there are no new taxes and can even say it with a straight face, almost. The tax increases are there falling from last year's budget, some \$400 million in total through all manners of smoke and mirrors — the masters of disguise again, Mr. Speaker. Utility increases — we seen Crown corporation dividend payments from these utility rate increases, indirect taxes from gambling, and taxes and the passing on of other expenditures to other agencies. Smoke and mirrors, Mr. Speaker.

And what about the downloading to municipalities? What about the massive debt load that was downloaded to the health

boards, Mr. Speaker? What about the forestry companies who are trying to create jobs? And again the list goes on. And let's not forget the 3 per cent inflation, current health board deficits, and salary increases yet to be completed, and the further postponement of painful cuts to come next year — Mr. Speaker, where will it end? Where will it end?

The government's lack of action on tax reduction doesn't impress anyone, Mr. Speaker, not a soul. And the people of the province realize that and are going to be speaking out, as they are now.

And as reported by the Saskatchewan taxpayers' association and confirmed by the government's own figures, Saskatchewan families face the highest personal tax burdens west of Quebec, Mr. Speaker. Provincial taxpayers, on even the lowest income earners, are 34 per cent higher in Saskatchewan than Alberta, and with the disparity growing much greater at these levels, Mr. Speaker.

And the Canadian Federation of Independent Business points out how bad our tax system is when compared to Alberta's. Alberta has a lower flat tax, half the high income tax surtax, and a marginal income tax rate several percentage points below Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta tax advantage is still very real, Mr. Speaker. And as soon as the government wakes up and the Minister of Finance and realizes that, the better off we will be, Mr. Speaker.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that the government woke up and smelled the coffee. Mr. Speaker, the growing disparity between Saskatchewan and Alberta is very real and the members opposite — to get their hands out of the sand would be appropriate.

The Alberta advantage is a real factor in where business will decide to locate their new businesses, Mr. Speaker. And with those locations, they will provide real jobs, not the temporary, six weeks' experiences the Minister of Economic Development and Minister of Social Services use to bolster their unfounded claims of job creation.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, any business wanting to come to Saskatchewan with the provincial sales tax that we have when they can cross the border to the west and settle there with none? It's amazing, Mr. Speaker, that the government can't recognize that simple solution.

Talk to our businesses on the west side of the province, Mr. Speaker. Go to Swift Current; go to Maple Creek; talk to the businesses. Talk to the businesses around Lloydminster. Talk to those people up there when they're deciding where they're going to set up new business or expand. It's not going to be in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government opposite hasn't begun to address these issues. We cannot, with our current high tax system, stimulate growth and economic development no matter what the member for Elphinstone says. His junkets around the world on

almost a monthly basis will bear little success if he cannot persuade his government to address fundamental tax change and relief, Mr. Speaker.

While I give the Minister of Finance some credit in trying to move in this direction, I don't think you would be able to get there quick enough before the damage is done. And the damage will last for ever, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will not pass the test of careful scrutiny. It has not dealt with the cuts to the top, starting at the cabinet level. And when the Premier promised that, why hasn't he delivered? I guess maybe the Premier doesn't want to roll the dice on this issue, Mr. Speaker. I think you should.

This budget continues to penalize people, Mr. Speaker. It creates an environment of fear and mistrust and leaves the ordinary people asking the questions, what next? I hear it daily, Mr. Speaker; what next?

The Premier challenged someone on this side of the House — perhaps it was the engineer from the riding of Kindersley — to support a decrease in the number of MLAs. Well, Mr. Speaker, if a decrease in MLAs means less MLAs for Regina and Saskatoon, then, Mr. Speaker, I could support that challenge from the Premier. I challenge the Premier to cut some of the members from Regina and Saskatoon by at least half. And you know, I think what would happen, we'd have a better system, Mr. Speaker.

I think the member from Saskatoon Eastview would probably support this as well, as he recognizes that he could most easily look after more of his people up there and do a much better job on behalf of them while saving the taxpayers thousands and thousands of dollars. Even half as many, Mr. Speaker, would be more than enough to do the job for Regina and Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Finance, and I asked the minister, who the minister admitted the other day had the final say in the budget. And I challenge the members opposite to quit rolling the dice. Why don't you just be honest and open and try and restore confidence in democracy and confidence in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to reinforce this opportunity to show true leadership, Mr. Speaker, to reinforce this opportunity to show true leadership I have a gift to remind the minister and the Premier and the members opposite of the need to quit rolling the dice, Mr. Speaker.

In the gift that I'd like to present across, Mr. Speaker, to the government, it's a beautiful pottery piece which you will see on it with Saskatchewan 1996 inscribed, Mr. Speaker. On it there's the only two well-known dice symbolizing the gamble that the government takes with our lives when they're setting the budget, Mr. Speaker. Around this is a circle of healing, Mr. Speaker, such an important symbol to our first nations citizens, Mr. Speaker, that those people that use and believe in, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that we need all the healing possible to help the people of Saskatchewan from the hurtful consequences of this government's actions.

I'd ask, Mr. Speaker, that they hang it in their cabinet room to remind themselves that there are better ways to serve the people who have placed their trust in the government, and probably maybe more appropriately, Mr. Speaker, misplaced their trust in them.

And I'd ask that the members opposite look at it from time to time and remind themselves what this province is all about. And in doing so, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this rolling-the-dice budget. And I'd like to send this across to the member.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. The hon. member will recognize that this is not a parliamentary item and falls under the category of an exhibit, and I'll ask that the page remove it from the Assembly. It's not permitted — order — not permitted to use it as part of his debate in the Assembly.

That member has taken his seat. Debate continues.

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to take part in the budget debate this afternoon and I'm pleased to rise in support of the 1996-97 budget. This is a budget that responds to the priorities of Saskatchewan people. This is a budget which prepares the province to meet the challenges and the opportunities of the new century. With people's input, we are setting out to build a new Saskatchewan; one that is fiscally sound, socially responsible, and economically vibrant.

Mr. Speaker, now this is a big agenda. Change is never easy. But we have every reason to be confident and optimistic. Our economy is growing. We're diversifying. We're improving training and education to better prepare our young people for jobs in the new economy.

We're leading the way in health care renewal to ensure that our excellent health system meets the needs of generations to come. We're looking at efficient and effective delivery of all of our services. And most important, we're doing all of this together. In this respect, our province is truly unique.

Here in Saskatchewan our ability to work together to achieve common goals is our greatest asset, and therein lies the recipe for strong families and neighbourhoods, strong communities, and ultimately, a strong province.

Mr. Speaker, because I did not have an opportunity to address the throne speech, I wish to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of our legislature. Your commitment to fairness, democratic principles, and the British parliamentary system, will serve you well in your role as Speaker, and will in turn serve all of us as members of this legislature and, in turn, the people of Saskatchewan, well. And yes, it must be quite a challenge to serve as a referee in such a unique uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support a budget which does meet the priorities of Saskatchewan people and the priorities of the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy. I represent a constituency where farming, entrepreneurship, oil and gas, small and medium-sized business are all integral parts of the economy.

I represent people who are hard-working, creative, adaptive,

and resilient — people who believe in strong families, in strong communities, in cooperation and compassion. There is a tremendous spirit of pride and volunteerism in my constituency, in my communities.

The constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy has a rich heritage, politically and historically, and it truly is an honour to be an elected representative of this area. When our government reduced the number of constituencies from 68 to 58, I was faced with change — 66 to 58 — and as I said earlier, change is not always easy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know that I'm not prone to worry. But I did worry. I worried about the new boundaries. I worried about the impact of a new area to serve. But I am proud and honoured to be representing this new riding of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and I'm committed to work hard for all of the constituents in my riding.

One of the fundamental reasons I ran for elected office in the very first place was based on strengthening representation, more accountability of government to the people, in other words, bringing government closer to the people. And I still believe strongly in strengthening the two-way-communication process between the people of Saskatchewan and my constituents to the government, bringing the views of my constituents to the government and bringing and explaining the role and initiatives of government to my constituents.

Our recent consultation process, preparing for the 21st century, is an important part of keeping our government responsive and accountable to the people of our province. I held nine consultation meetings in Weyburn-Big Muddy and had excellent participation, and I want to thank the constituents who took part in this process.

And what did we hear from the people of Saskatchewan? What did I hear from the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy through consultation? And how did our government respond? Well, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that we did listen to the people of Saskatchewan, and our budget did respond to their priorities.

We heard from the people of Saskatchewan, and we listened. They wanted continued balanced budgets; no new taxes; health, education, and social programs to be protected from federal cut-backs. They wanted jobs set as a priority. They want government at all levels to be effective, efficient, and accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that we have listened to the people and that our budget has positively responded to the priorities set by the people of Saskatchewan. Consultation is an important part of building a stronger province. We only succeeded in meeting the challenges of our first term because we worked together with all Saskatchewan people. Saskatchewan people made sacrifices in order to secure a better tomorrow.

Saskatchewan people are again willing to work together to prepare our province for the new century. Yes, Mr. Speaker, our 1996-97 budget responds to the priorities of the people of

Saskatchewan, prepares the province for the challenges and opportunities of the new century by building prosperity and jobs for the new century. Saskatchewan people want the security that comes with jobs and opportunity.

The budget builds on Saskatchewan's strong and growing economy by continuing the reduction in the debt reduction surtax, to provide tax release for individuals and families, tax relief of \$150 per individual, an extra \$55 million in the pockets of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan which will help our economy.

Using targeted tax incentives and cutting red tape to encourage business growth is another part of our budget and investing up to \$238 million over four years to strengthen the agriculture and food industry. Just this past month, the south-east REDA (regional economic development authorities) was formed in my area of the province. And I'm pleased that our budget continues to support the development and programs of REDAs. The businesses, the workers, the organizations of my area have been happy to participate in the consultation process in preparing *Partnership For Growth*.

They will also be pleased that this budget has supported the strategies in *Partnership For Growth*. The funding support for STEP, the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, helps business take advantage of the new global market-place, has been applauded by the business community.

Yes, securing jobs for the new century is a priority of Saskatchewan people, and we have responded.

Mr. Speaker, people also told us they want to know that the vital services will always be there for them. Health care, education, and social programs are a priority for Saskatchewan people. And the Saskatchewan government listened and agreed with the people of this province.

It's too bad that the federal Liberals would not listen, as they chose not to cut their own government structures — not to cut the Senate, not to cut the tax breaks and the grants to their friends in big business and the banks. But they decided to do 75 per cent of their cuts to Canadian people on the essential services of health care, education, and social programs. This is not the Saskatchewan way. It may be the Liberal, Tory way, but not the social democratic way, not the Saskatchewan way.

The Saskatchewan way is preserving the cornerstones of our quality of life. Saskatchewan people want to know that vital services will always be there for them. Our four-year plan in the 1996-97 budget safeguards health, education, and social services by providing \$110 million in new provincial funding to replace federal cuts in the '96-97 budget, replacing 96 percent of the 252 million federal dollars cut to the core services in our province by 1999-2000 . . . and by working with Saskatchewan people to continue renewing health care, education, and social services for the 21st century.

I am pleased that we have announced funding for implementation of 911, an important and essential service to help meet the needs of all Saskatchewan residents — a system, no matter where you live, that will help you be secure and safe,

to all our residents, to all our communities right across this province.

(1630)

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan wanted the cornerstones of our quality of life preserved, and we have delivered. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan also wanted a streamlined, effective, and efficient government, less administration, more service.

The 1996-97 budget reduces administration costs, improves service delivery, and redirects savings to essential services. — with actions like streamlining operations in the Department of Highways and Transportation to free up \$6.3 million for road construction and preservation; finding \$7 million in administrative savings in the Department of Health to help maintain funding for health districts and pay for expanded health services; consolidating the delivery and marketing function of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance to save \$5 million a year; and consolidating small vehicle safety and registration in Saskatchewan Government Insurance, which will generate savings of \$1.4 million a year.

Our strategy to reduce government costs by cutting administration, eliminating duplication and overlap, and by delivering services better will result in savings of more than \$50 million in 1996-97. These savings will be used to protect our health, post-secondary education, and social programs from federal Liberal cut-backs.

People of Saskatchewan want sound financial management. They want balanced budgets, debt reduction and tax reduction. Sound financial management gives Saskatchewan people the freedom to choose their future, and the 1996-97 budget delivers on that. It provides a plan for four more balanced budgets; no tax increases for individuals, families or small business; a plan to reduce the provincial debt by \$2.4 billion from 1994 to 2000; and with that, annual interest savings of \$100 million by 1999-2000.

These increased savings can then go back into either further tax reductions or further services to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, our budget delivers on the priorities of Saskatchewan people the Saskatchewan way, with common sense, cooperation, and compassion.

But what do we hear from the opposition parties? We hear support of the federal Liberal Party by our provincial Liberals, as the federal Liberals slash money to health care, education, and social programs — over \$100 million this year and an additional 100 million the next year.

We hear support of the federal Liberals by our provincial Liberals to the slashing of the Crow rate benefit; decreased to zero — a \$320 million loss to our farmers each and every year from now on. We hear nothing in criticism of the federal government by the provincial Liberals in how they're deregulating and abandoning the rail line system in this province.

But what we do hear from the provincial Liberals is saying we need more money on roads or maybe on GRIP or on health care. I hear about . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the hon. member for Weyburn-Big Muddy is participating in debate and deserves the attention of the House. And I'll ask hon. members on both sides of the House to refrain from their personal debates. They both have opportunity, if I recognize the members correctly. Both will have opportunity if they choose to participate in debate, and we'll all look forward to hearing their remarks on the record.

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But we do hear from the provincial Liberals is they say spend more money on roads. Spend more money on health care. We need more money on an institution or a building called the Plains Hospital, but that doesn't mean that we need more money for services. This means less money for services.

They say reduce taxes, bring down the debt quicker. Now even in my background as a teacher, elementary students would know that this does not add up. This may explain why they had such a low or no turn-out to their public consultation process. I think that the people of Saskatchewan know that these Liberals don't listen. They don't listen at the provincial level or the federal level.

But who do these federal Liberals listen to? What I have here today — reporting on business, labour, and government — may be some clues on who the Liberals do listen to. The party of big business, Liberals get \$6 million from corporations in 1994. Is this who they consult with? There's another list of companies that gave 10,000 or more to Liberals in 1994. Uncollected corporate taxes of over \$40 billion . . . Maybe this is who the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan listens to. But they don't listen to the Saskatchewan people.

What do the Tories have to offer? Well they have a record. They offered irresponsible government, outrageous debt, and a mortgage on the future of our children. They try to remove themselves from their record, but when the Cameco shares were sold, their solution was to spend the profits. It sounds like the same old Tories to me.

No, we have listened to the people of Saskatchewan. People of Saskatchewan want a common-sense approach to government. Saskatchewan people want to look forward to the 21st century with a sense of confidence and security. Our budget has delivered a future that promises more jobs; balanced budgets; reduced taxes; declining public debt; secures the cornerstones of our quality of life, our health, education, and social programs. Our budget has delivered on securing a future of optimism and hope for the people of Saskatchewan, our children, and our grandchildren.

I am proud to support The Saskatchewan Way, as our budget prepares Saskatchewan for the new century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a short time to talk about the budget that was presented last week by the Minister of Finance.

I want to first say that I don't understand the member from Arm River. As I live on the east shore of Last Mountain Lake, very close to Last Mountain Lake, and he lives on the west shore of Last Mountain Lake, we only have a mile of water between us. How we can see things so much differently . . . I don't know whether it's we get the sun earlier in the morning, and he stays in the dark longer or because most of the dust storms come from the west, and he's got his vision clogged up or what. But I think his vision on this budget, as I listened to him deliver his speech now, is very fogged.

The budget, Mr. Speaker, is about preparing Saskatchewan for the 21st century. It's about planning today for prosperity and security tomorrow. The budget responds to the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan, prepares the province for the challenges and the opportunities of the new century by doing four major things.

Number one, building prosperity and jobs for the new century. As the minister said in her address last Thursday, people have told us that grants to businesses are the wrong way to promote growth. Now we agree with that. Rather than direct grants, we've instead used targeted tax incentives proven to stimulate new investment and to create jobs.

Targeted tax incentives work. In our first term, we reduced the small business corporate income tax rate by 20 per cent. Last year, we introduced the 9 per cent investment tax credit on capital purchases to support manufacturing and processing. We also reduced the corporate income tax from 17 per cent to, in some cases, as low as 10 per cent on manufacturing and processing profits, depending on the level of business activity and the new jobs that were located in Saskatchewan. These targeted incentives are working, and I'm pleased to say that they will continue. The incentives have already contributed to an overall increase of 3,300 jobs in the manufacturing and processing sector in 1995 in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, beginning in January 1997, the government will improve the tax treatment for Saskatchewan-based truckers by ensuring that all interprovincial truckers follow the same tax rules. This will also help stimulate repairs and equipment sales within the province.

The budget provides funding to support the existing 15 REDAs and to encourage the establishment of new ones. In fact we expect to see nine new REDAs formed in the coming months. These REDAs create and establish industry in their own localities, thus jobs in rural Saskatchewan for rural people. We are also keeping our promise to invest in our youth. We will promote funding for 2,500 summer jobs to assist young people in furthering their education. In the whole budget there is no tax increases.

Number two, we are preserving the cornerstones of our quality of life. Saskatchewan people want security of knowing that essential public services will always be there for them. They

want to know that if they become sick, they can receive medical services. They want to know that their children will have access to primary education and secondary or advanced education regardless of their financial situation. They want to know that if they fall on troubled times, a social safety net will be there to catch them.

These vital cornerstones of our quality of life are being attacked in great vigour by the federal Liberals. In their 1996-97 budget, Mr. Speaker, the federal government made three-quarters of their cuts to health, post-secondary education, and social programs. Health care, \$47 million they cut; social services of \$52 million; post-secondary education, \$15 million; for a grand total of cuts to the social services or social programs of \$114 million.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that we as a provincial government are not going to pass these cuts on to the public, but we are in fact going to back-fill the entire losses from the federal to the tune of 100 per cent. The new four-year financial plan presented on budget day provides with \$240 million of new provincial funding to back-fill a total of 96 per cent of the announced federal transfer payments that were announced until 1999-2000. In other words this government is committed to shielding the people of Saskatchewan from the full impact of the federal cuts.

Number three was restructuring and streamlining government. We've heard in our consultation processes as we go around the country, people are saying if you want us to cut back, if you want us to reduce, you do it; so we have done that.

We have consolidated the small vehicle safety and registration in Saskatchewan Government Insurance, a saving of \$1.4 million a year. Winding down of Ag Credit Corporation will save another \$3 million a year. Saskatchewan Crop Insurance is consolidating its delivery and marketing systems to save \$5 million a year.

But restructuring and streamlining of any corporation, whether it be corporation or government, means that there are always job losses or office closures. And our restructuring and streamlining is no different.

But it will not be done as Mr. Black did when he took over the newspapers in Saskatchewan. We will manage the job losses with sensitivity and compassion through the use of early retirement, job sharing, and other measures that we can use. Our strategy to reduce government costs by cutting administration, eliminating duplication and overlap, and by delivering services better, will save \$50 million a year.

And the fourth pillar is providing the freedom to choose and control our own future. As a result of measures that we as a government have taken to pay down the debt and to reduce spending, the annual interest costs on government on the proposed debt will be \$100 million a year less in 1999-2000 than they are this year.

By the year 2000, the province's debt will be \$2.4 billion lower than it was in 1994. This will bring down the total debt load

from 68 per cent of the province's gross domestic product down to 44 per cent of the gross domestic product over the same period.

By cutting government spending, by balancing the budget, and by paying down the debt, we ensure security and prosperity now and into the new century for the people of Saskatchewan. Most importantly, it gives us and it gives our children a unique privilege — the financial freedom to decide and to control our own future.

There is no better place to live in the world than in Saskatchewan. We have built a society where people and government work together to maintain our shared values of community, cooperation, and compassion.

With this budget, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people can look forward to the 21st century with a sense of confidence and security. And for that reason, I will be standing in my place and supporting the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1645)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My response as the member from Athabasca on the budget really isn't going to reflect on the budget but rather what the budget missed, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say when it comes to northern Saskatchewan, I think many members in this House are aware that if you're going to pick an area that has been forgotten and basically ignored, I guess we can say, you can pick a card. You can pick any card, be it in housing, be it in roads, be it in health, be it in economic or social development — there's a wide variety of problems in northern Saskatchewan. And we all know they exist and I cannot see why we continue to ignore them.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing exciting in the budget for the people of northern Saskatchewan. Again, I am so frustrated in this process, and we look at the facts, we look at the North, we look at what we haven't done in northern Saskatchewan as opposed as to what we should be cutting back. We can see where the treatment of northern Saskatchewan leaves a lot more to be desired.

I guess the big thing that we have to re-emphasize in this budget and in the future budgets to come, Mr. Speaker, is really where is our compassion and where is our focus. We have to stop looking at northern Saskatchewan as a problem area when we design future budgets. Northern Saskatchewan certainly has a high unemployment rate. They have severe housing shortages and housing problems. Health care is a problem. Social and economic development is a problem. And again I can go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The North is not a problem area and we have to get away from that ideology and that thinking. The North is part of this great province of Saskatchewan. These are Saskatchewan people we're speaking about, Mr. Speaker. We're not talking of a

problem area within the context of it being way in the heck in the far reaches of our province.

The question that we ask the government and the question that we ask any budget is, what is our strategy when it comes to northern Saskatchewan people? Is that strategy and is that budget clear, and is it what people want, Mr. Speaker? And these questions we didn't have to ask, Mr. Speaker, because they weren't addressed in the budget. They weren't discussed in the budget. They weren't pointed out in the budget.

So my focus, Mr. Speaker, is really on what has not been said and done in the budget as opposed to what has been said.

I go back to a 1991 document here regarding this current government's phrase of, our commitment to northern communities. I'd like to read the document for the record, and also for the members opposite.

The New Democrats are committed to a positive vision for northern people and communities. We offer a government committed to working closely with northern people in order to improve the economic opportunities and quality of life in northern communities. The first job will be to open the books of the province to determine the resources available for our priority commitments.

As financial resources are available, the New Democrats will: (1) work with northern people to develop new revenue-sharing arrangements for northern communities; (2) work with northern communities to implement a sustainable economic development plan to benefit all northern people; (3) work with northern communities to improve the accessibility and quality of important community-based services like health care and education; (4) to establish appropriate northern transportation subsidies for food, health care products and other basic necessities.

These are what were promised in 1991 to the northern communities, Mr. Speaker, and if members wish to have a copy of that, I'm sure — if they haven't seen it — I'll be glad to present them a copy of that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about also a letter I received from one of my constituents from the community of Stony Rapids. The reason why I bring that up, Mr. Speaker, is one of the promises made, of course, goes back to the northern transportation subsidies for food. And this gentleman from Stony Rapids sends me a fax, and if people want to see the fax I can certainly give them a copy of this as well. But it says:

A quick price check on groceries at the store in town reveals the following: one loaf of bread, \$2.60; one two litre of 2 per cent milk, \$4.50; one pound of butter, \$4; and one pack of Kraft dinner, \$1.50.

These are basic items that this person bought in Stony Rapids. Now I don't know what subsidy was mentioned here in terms of the transportation subsidies for food, but obviously these subsidies are not being impacted on prices of food in northern

Saskatchewan communities.

The cost of living is extremely high in places like Stony Rapids, Uranium City, and especially the far northern communities and as well as the core area of the Athabasca constituency, which of course is communities like La Loche and Buffalo Narrows.

Now the cost of living in Stony Rapids, a general breakdown is as follows: rent, the guy pays 450 per month; power, he pays \$100, soon to be climbing is what he indicates; telephone, again he indicates that some of it's his personal use, but it's roughly \$100 each month; the heat, because of the extreme cold and extreme temperature of the far North, is \$750 a month; the food is roughly \$1,000 — and we're talking about a family, we're not talking about one individual — sewer is 120 and water is 160. Of course because Stony Rapids hasn't got water and sewer, they've got to do the hauling.

That roughly ranges to about \$2,680 for a family, and they haven't included things like clothing, school supplies for children, recreation, trips south, vehicle expense; so really, you know, the \$2,680 that they spend each month living in Stony Rapids doesn't take into account the total cost of doing business, as a family is in northern Saskatchewan.

If they were fortunate to get a job that paid \$10 per hour, they worked 40 hours per week, and of course, they would still only receive \$1,600 per month, Mr. Speaker. And that, of course, is before all the CPP (Canada Pension Plan) and UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission).

If both members are working, it still would not equal to the amount needed to survive in northern Saskatchewan. And then if both members are working, then you've got to have a babysitter to watch the children. So of course, that also goes up.

And is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker — and the member of the constituent asks me in this letter — is it any wonder that 80 per cent of the population of northern Saskatchewan require some sort of social assistance? Now if one were to receive freight subsidies, where are they? Were they announced in the budget, Mr. Speaker? No, they were not.

And I think, you know, again I want to share this with the Assembly. If they want to see the facts for themselves, I'm more than prepared to present that letter to the members if they wish.

I've got several points I want to raise here, when we talk about northern Saskatchewan being the problem area as perceived by a number of people. Again I go back to the point, northern Saskatchewan is part of Saskatchewan. It's not a problem area.

We talk about the food prices, Mr. Speaker. But you can buy a bottle of 40-ounce whisky, same price in Regina, that you can in La Loche. The liquor is subsidized. I know, Mr. Speaker, because I've bought a few.

So in essence, you have to look at the situation of the priority. And it would be nice to see a freight subsidy in this budget for the people of the far northern communities. It would've been

nice to see some effort being made in the water and sewer department for communities like Stony Rapids. But they weren't mentioned. And again I want to share that with the House.

Again I go back to the Indian and Metis aboriginal people in the workforce. We talk about unemployment, Mr. Speaker. The huge percentage of northern Saskatchewan communities consist primarily of Indian and Metis people. In my particular riding of 25 communities, there's roughly 8 that are treaty band members, and the other 17 are Metis communities.

I share some national stats again for the sake of the House. The national unemployment rate for aboriginal people is 70 per cent living on reserves and 50 per cent living in urban areas. That's for the Indian population. Current unemployment rates for the aboriginal is double that of the national average, Mr. Speaker. Income levels of the aboriginal people are one-half to two-thirds that of non-aboriginal peoples. Social assistance rates of aboriginal people are more than twice the national average.

And again, Mr. Speaker, we can see the trends continuing. The aboriginal population is much younger than the mainstream Canadian population. The 1986 census showed that 37 per cent of all status Indians have less than a grade 9 education. It is estimated that 45 per cent of Indians that are on reserve are functionally illiterate.

Now that's not to say, Mr. Speaker, that we haven't got very intelligent people out there. That is to say that we haven't been committed hard enough and strong enough, Mr. Speaker, not only to the northern part of this province but to the Indian and the Metis people of Saskatchewan.

The unemployment and training barriers faced by the aboriginal people and northern people, Mr. Speaker, is: number one, the aboriginal labour force is lower skilled and sometimes possess lower educational levels than a non-aboriginal; the need for adequate life skills and career training for the aboriginal youth; the need to increase an aboriginal career-counselling service. In order for employment and training programs to be effective, non-aboriginal people must understand that distinct cultural differences exist between aboriginal peoples.

There's a need for private sector and the government to establish cooperative work programs for aboriginal high school students to develop in the partnerships with the aboriginal community.

And last, Mr. Speaker, is we need to create both internal and external mechanisms which incorporate and utilize aboriginal input in implementing employment equity. Equity programs that recruit aboriginal people simply to fill minority quotas are not effective, and are demoralizing to aboriginal employees.

So we see the stats, Mr. Speaker. They speak for themselves. These are not stats we pluck out of the air for the sake of public relations. These are stats that are published all throughout various government documents.

We see a letter here from a gentleman from the far north talking about the food prices. But again I go back to the budget — nothing on subsidies for the far northern communities; nothing on improving and increasing the quality of opportunity that a northern aboriginal person may need to get a job.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, just from the initial comments I have here on the economic development strategy of northern Saskatchewan, we know that northern Saskatchewan possesses a tremendous amount of wealth — there's tourism; there's natural gas in northern Saskatchewan; there's forestry; there's mining; and if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, the second largest income-generating industry in the province, I believe, is mining. Now what portion of that comes from northern Saskatchewan is anybody's guess.

But the thing is, Mr. Speaker, is what I found kind of disheartening in this particular speech was that there's nothing special about revenue sharing. Again I go back to the commitment to northern communities: work with northern people to develop new revenue-sharing arrangements for northern communities. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the good question we have, is where is it?

The big problem in northern Saskatchewan when it comes to the government is that they cannot continue to base the economy of the North on purely developing the non-renewable resources such as mining for gold, uranium, diamonds, etc. These resources are non-renewable. They do not come back, Mr. Speaker. And the northern Saskatchewan people have for many years been talking about revenue sharing. And of course the northern Saskatchewan people, and I myself as an MLA, support the industry of northern Saskatchewan to continue. They believe the North should be developed.

However, while we support northern development, Mr. Speaker, there has to be more emphasis on developing locally based businesses.

The Speaker: — Order. It now being 5 o'clock, the House will stand recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

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