The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

The names on this petition are from Melville, from Regina, from Glenavon, from Balcarres, Grenfell, and a number of small communities in rural Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

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

Some of the communities where people have signed from are Rocanville, Wapella, Moosomin, and Maryfield, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present names of concerned citizens about the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

The people that have signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Carnduff, Moosomin, Rocanville, Esterhazy, and throughout southern Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise 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 closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Weyburn and Regina, but also some smaller communities like Ceylon, Ogema, and Milestone.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

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

The signatures on the petition are all from Regina, and I suspect from Regina South.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition are from La Loche, from Wynyard, from Moose Jaw, Indian Head, and all over southern Saskatchewan.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed from people and concerned citizens from Regina, and in particular the southern part of Regina.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from across 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 those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Vanguard, Pambrun, Hodgeville, all in my constituency, as well as Eastend, Swift Current, and many from Regina.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again we rise today to present petitions of the undersigned people of Saskatchewan:

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

And the people that have primarily signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Regina. And I wish to present this to the Assembly. Thank you.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, day number 36 of the legislative sitting, the 36th day I've stood with my colleagues and the people of Saskatchewan in trying to

save the Plains Health Centre here in Regina. 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 I see are from . . . many from my own constituency, Wood Mountain, Assiniboia, Killdeer, Rockglen, many from the Weyburn and Ogema areas, and of course from Regina Albert South, Dewdney, Elphinstone, and it looks like most of the constituencies right here in Regina where they're trying to get their members to stand up for the Plains Health Centre.

The Speaker: — I want to remind the member, as he already knows, and I know that, that it is not permissible to have debate when presenting petitions. And I'll simply ask for his cooperation on that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan that were given to me last weekend in Vibank. The prayer reads:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly will be pleased to: (1) challenge Bill C-68 in court; (2) refuse to allow the federal government to take over enforcement in Saskatchewan; (3) and not allow the implementation of Bill C-68 in Saskatchewan while the Bill is being challenged in court.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitioners come from the Vibank, McLean, Francis, Balgonie, Regina, Odessa, Qu'Appelle, Riceton, Lipton, Kelso, Maryfield, all across the south-east corner of the province, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

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

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize in your gallery some very important guests that are here today, and on behalf of the official opposition I would like to welcome the students from the Regina area, from here.

And I'd also like to welcome the international guests that we have from south of the border that are here in your gallery as well today, Mr. Speaker. And we welcome them and I hope all the hon. members here will join me in welcoming these very fine young people to our Assembly, and I hope they enjoy the proceedings this afternoon. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. On behalf of the Deputy Premier who is delayed returning from a noon engagement, it's my pleasure to welcome to the Assembly and to you, Mr. Speaker, 16 students in your gallery, on the government side of the gallery, 16 students from the Kitchener Community School. They're accompanied by their teachers, Cheryl Ball and Allen Wills, and by a chaperon, Gary Shore.

I hope the members find today's proceedings interesting and informative. And it is to be hoped that your member, the Deputy Premier, will be back in time to meet you after the question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — If there are no other introductions, the Speaker would like to introduce a guest to the Assembly who are visiting from the Speaker's riding today. In the Speaker's gallery you will see 16 students from Wheatland Christian School who are visiting here today. They're from grades 1 to 7 and they are accompanied today by their teachers Jeff Milmine and Sandra Godsoe, as well as chaperons Tami Gadd, Brenda Ilchuk, and Carol Lewis.

They'll be staying in the galleries today until 2 o'clock to watch proceedings of the Assembly and then they'll leave for a tour of the building, and with the help of the Deputy Speaker, I hope to be able to meet with them at 2:30 for a visit and refreshments and also a chance for a photo.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, I would ask that you would extend a warm welcome to these visitors from Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Wakaw Warriors Win Volleyball Championship

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and honoured to rise today to present to this Assembly and especially to my colleagues — I guess my colleagues over on the left — the weekly sports report from the Humboldt constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Wakaw Warriors midget boys volleyball team who recently won the provincial championship held in Prince Albert. They will now take part in the western Canadian championships to be held in Victoria, B.C. (British Columbia), from April 26 to the 29, competing with the teams from Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Victoria.

Wakaw previously won this championship in 1980 and garnered a silver medal in 1981. The present team has won many previous awards. They won peewee provincial titles in 1992 and '93, and bantam A and B provincial titles in 1993 and '94. And now they succeeded in winning a provincial title at the midget level, a remarkable feat for a small school and town.

Congratulations to their coaches, Morris Nemish and Michael Romanchuk. And congratulations, Wakaw Warriors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

April Petroleum and Natural Gas Rights Sales

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, for myself and the member from Kindersley, I want to call the House's attention to a recent announcement that contains good news for our two constituencies and for Swift Current, Estevan, Weyburn, and Lloydminster constituencies. Good news for us in this case means good news for the whole province.

The April sale of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights netted $13.4 million in revenue for the province. Combined with the first sale of the year in February, the total so far this year is 25.8 million. That compares quite nicely to the 16.7 million from the same two sales last year.

As a member from the north-west, I am particularly pleased to note that the majority of the lands sold for exploratory permits were in the heavy-oil area south-west of North Battleford. This means increased exploration activity in my area with the potential for development of new reserves. Exploration and new reserves mean new jobs, Mr. Speaker. The next sale will be in June and I expect this high interest level will be maintained. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan War Brides' Association Reunion

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend marked the gathering of a very special group of ladies in Saskatoon — the Saskatchewan War Brides' Association held their annual reunion. This event is near and dear to me because my mother was a war bride. When she came over on a boat to join my father in Canada, she was a frightened young woman. She'd left behind her family, her homeland, and most of her friends, to start a new life with her Canadian husband. The only people she knew here were the other war brides that had also made the journey.

Throughout the years, many of them maintained strong friendships. My mother and other war brides faced unique problems that they helped each other through. Many of them could not afford to travel back to Europe to visit their families so their friendships became an important link to their roots overseas.

Each year, the Saskatchewan War Brides' Association has a reunion. While many of them have moved on or are unable to make the trip, those who do find the time to be there, find it to be a gathering of their own special little families.

I would like to recognize all the Saskatchewan war brides and the contribution they have made to Saskatchewan and Canada over the years. I thank them for their strength and their courage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North-west Saskatchewan Drought

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago, members in this House noted that the Easter holiday is directly connected to the feeling of optimism that comes with the first warm air and the first sighting of something green. Especially this year when winter seemed to have a permanent grip around our throats, we have hung on because we know that spring and the rebirth will come eventually.

But like the harsh winter before it, spring this year in Saskatchewan is delivering something less than its promise. I will let other members talk about floods. In my part of the province, we are facing a different problem — the reverse. As I drive around my constituency, I am saddened to see how dry it is.

We have had seven consecutive years of below average rainfall. This has caused drought conditions not seen in the north-west, not even in the '30s.

Mr. Speaker, our area produces a quarter of Saskatchewan's cattle and our pastures are tinder dry; hay is in short supply and feed is expensive. Our grain and cattle producers are facing a tremendous challenge. Crop insurance will be a help, but rain would be a godsend.

I want members to be aware of our situation. As so often has been the case in Saskatchewan's history, we're having trouble finding the balance between too much and too little water. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Passing of George Abel

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to draw to the attention of all hon. members, the passing of a great man in the city of Melville. Anyone who is near to my age and a great hockey fan will know the name of George Abel who passed away on April 16 at the age of 80.

Mr. Abel is perhaps best known as a member of the Edmonton Mercuries who represented Canada at the 1952 Winter Olympics in Oslo, Sweden. Mr. Speaker, this was the last Canadian team to win the gold medal at the Olympics. In 1993, Mr. Abel was inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame. George Abel contributed to Melville throughout his entire life, operating a business there until his retirement in 1971.

He was a devoted sportsman. As well as hockey, Mr. Abel enjoyed curling, hunting, and fishing. He was also a devoted family man, leaving to mourn his wife Joyce and three sons, as well as many other members of his family.

Mr. Speaker, the whole of Melville is saddened by the passing of this great man. However, his dedication to his sport, to his family, and to his community, will live long in our memories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

La Loche Road Construction Training

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was pleased to speak about another example of how our training programs are helping to create new opportunities in northern Saskatchewan. This trend will continue as 20 residents of La Loche are being trained for employment as heavy equipment operators. This is a result of a partnership agreement between Future Skills, New Careers Corporation, and a multi-party training plan, the northern training program, Northlands College, Woodland Institute, the village of La Loche, local contractors, and the mining industry.

It is quite evident, as we announced in our *Partnership For Growth* strategy, that the skills training and education must be linked with these kinds of partnerships to create jobs for Saskatchewan people as we head into the new century.

This agreement in the La Loche region involves classroom training and practical experience during the construction work on the La Loche road to Garson Lake. After they have completed the program these trainees will have the opportunity for employment with local contractors and the northern mining industry. Training will be delivered by the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) Woodland Institute of Prince Albert.

Community representatives in La Loche say this agreement will benefit the area in several ways. Twenty people will receive training for gainful employment and there will be improvement to the northern infrastructure.

Congratulation to the Department of Post-Secondary Education and to all the people who will be running this program. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Native Dancers

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to recognize the worldwide achievement of two Weyburn residents. Donetta and Trevor Ewack are quite simply two remarkable native dancers known throughout first nations and increasingly around the world.

As a recent newspaper article pointed out, Donetta Ewack is the best native dancer in the world, and Trevor is not far behind. Although they live in Weyburn, they dance and compete worldwide. Last September Donetta won the junior adult women's world championship in fancy dancing in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

Last year they also danced in many European countries, at the Goodwill Games in Russia, at half-time at the Hula Bowl this January, and of course they danced at the opening ceremonies at our Grey Cup celebration in November.

As well, Mr. Speaker, Donetta's sister is a world-class dancer, and her eight-year-old daughter Alisa already has 20 trophies of her own.

Donetta is also well-known for her sewing talents. Her costumes are purchased by museums around the world and are worn by other dancers and movie stars. One of the many things the talents of the Ewacks prove, Mr. Speaker, is that Saskatchewan is wide and deep in exceptional people. I congratulate them on their success and wish them many more championship steps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Association For Community Living Employer of the Year Award

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The community of Yorkton is very proud to recognize the Saskatchewan Association For Community Living for their continual assistance in employing disabled people. I am proud to share with this House the news that the Yorkton repair shop of the Department of Highways has been awarded the Employer of the Year by the Saskatchewan Association For Community Living.

For almost a year now, the shop has employed a disabled person as an assistant. The shop employees have worked very hard to make this initiative a success by providing coaching in basic work skills and transportation to and from work.

A unique feature of this initiative is that the client from the Yorkton community living association is employed on a contract basis based on the department's pay scale. This offers the contract employee the opportunity to earn a full living wage.

I would like to commend Mr. Al MacLeod and all of the employees of the Yorkton highway shop for their hard work and their dedication. They have set an excellent example for others in both the public and the private sector. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that all members of the House will want to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of this fine award.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Overpayments

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker media reports this morning and yesterday indicate that the farmers are not prepared to allow this government to get away with breaking promises any longer. There are indications that farmers are prepared to take legal action to ensure that the NDP (New Democratic Party) government is held to a promise not to collect on the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) wind-up.

Will the Acting Minister of Agriculture explain why he and his government are backing farmers into a corner, leaving them little choice but to pursue legal avenues to force this government to honour a commitment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite, we've said it many times in this House that if the farmers owe a bill, basically from the 1993 overpayment in GRIP, and the 1994 premium, that they have to pay the bill. I would like the member opposite to quite causing confusion with the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan. We have farmers now that think the Liberal caucus are going to pay those bills, and I don't think that's their intention. So quit confusing the issue. The farmers owe the bills; they will pay the bills.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think what the minister is mistaking is that the farmers want the government to look after the bills and commit to a promise that they made last March in this House.

The day that Saskatchewan farmers, Mr. Speaker, have to go to court to try and hold a government to a promise is truly a sad day and will reflect badly on each and every member opposite. The fact that this government has gone to such lengths to avoid honouring a commitment demonstrates what contempt they have for the farmers of this province.

Will the Acting Minister of Agriculture demonstrate that he has some integrity and honour by making a commitment in this House today to honour the promise that his former predecessor made?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try one more time. I'm going to tell the member opposite that he should be advising the farmers that if they owe a bill, that the intention is that they should pay that bill, and not confuse the issue.

He states that this government breaks promises, yet his federal counterparts, who promised to do away with the GST (goods and services tax), Mr. Speaker, is now forcing a GST on all the provinces. It's a very sad day. What the member should do, Mr. Speaker, is talk to the farmers that are sending him their bills and tell them directly that no, the Liberal caucus has no intentions of paying those bills for the farmers and that they should indeed go to the corporation and make arrangements if they are having difficulty making those payments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Worker Severance Payments

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health speaks regularly about how every health dollar and decision under his department's control is being made in the best possible interest of health care. Unfortunately this is not the case, and every resident of Saskatchewan, particularly those in rural Saskatchewan, know this.

Mr. Speaker, to use one example, Grant Rathwell was laid off from the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek District Health Board early this year. He was then quickly hired by the Department of Health in the northern health services branch.

Of course we wish Mr. Rathwell the best of luck in his new position. However, I wonder if the Minister of Health can tell this House if Grant Rathwell returned the severance package he was awarded, ensuring that valuable health care dollars in the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health District system remain in the district to provide valuable care for the sick and the elderly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Actually, Mr. Speaker, I think it's sad that the member would suggest that this individual, who I don't know, who apparently lost his job in Moose Jaw, should not be able to go out just like anybody else and get another job. Apparently the Department of Health, probably through the Public Service Commission, gave this man a job after he lost his job.

I don't think it's fair for the member to suggest that this man shouldn't have been able to go out and get another job; that he wasn't entitled to whatever kind of arrangement he made with his former employer, the Moose Jaw Health District; or to raise this man's personal circumstances in the House. That's my view, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the sick and elderly in the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health District, I will allow the minister to make another attempt at answering these sorts of questions.

I do have another example to demonstrate that this isn't an isolated incident. This case involves Bert Linklater who was also laid off by the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek District Health Board. Coincidentally, Mr. Linklater was also hired back rather quickly to serve in the Department of Health's district support branch.

Again I believe the public would be interested in knowing if Mr. Linklater returned the severance package he was awarded. Will the minister explain how many severance packages the taxpayers of Saskatchewan can afford, given his government's propensity to rehire these same people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well just so the House and the people watching this understand, Mr. Speaker, the member is giving misleading information. He's suggesting that the Department of Health laid off these two people, or fired them, and gave them severance, and then rehired them. This is not true.

The Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health Board apparently let these two individuals go. The member is chagrined because they apparently applied for jobs in the Department of Health, won a competition and were hired. And I say I'm glad they were. I wish them all the best, Mr. Speaker.

They lost their jobs in Moose Jaw. They competed for jobs in the Department of Health. They got the jobs. I wish them the best of luck.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grid Road Maintenance

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again this government appears to be taking action which will have a negative impact on our rural people. According to a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) news report, this government is refusing to cost-share grid road rebuilding projects and is instead directing these monies back into government coffers.

The Highways minister told reporters yesterday, and I quote:

> Grid roads are very important and will be more important given the changing transportation needs. What we have to do is work more closely with rural municipalities to better plan transportation needs.

Mr. Speaker, many of the grid roads across this province are in need of major repair and upgrading. Does the minister feel that this latest example of downloading is what he describes as working "more closely with rural municipalities?"

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I can understand the member not wanting to work with municipalities, or plan better. I mean I think if he were government he would be increasing taxes and giving more services of some kind, and of course, reducing the debt at the same time. I'm not sure, it sounds like maybe Houdini. But anyway, I don't think he'll be over here to do that.

I want to make it perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, that there is no reduction to rural road construction in the province of Saskatchewan. We have 53,000 kilometres of rural roads, designated rural roads, in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The province cost-shares between 50 and 80 per cent of those roads. Certainly the funding remains the same.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as one reeve so aptly put it on a CBC report last evening, the Minister of Municipal Government, and I quote, "hasn't got the sense that God gave a goose." And the lack of commitment by the minister and this government to rural Saskatchewan is clear evidence of this fact.

Mr. Speaker, if the government refuses to hold up its end of the deal, local governments will have no other option but to increase taxes to allow for the upgrading of grid roads. Will the minister explain why is it that the people of rural Saskatchewan are forced to endure reduced services time and time and time again while continually paying more?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I think the member may want to look in the mirror to find the goose. But I want to say to the member opposite that there is no reduction in designated rural road funding this year. The cost-sharing from the province is between 50 and 80 per cent, depending on the designation of the road.

There are 53,000 kilometres of rural roads in the province of Saskatchewan, and certainly some of the RMs (rural municipality) have a concern with futures because they've spent into the future and now have to play some catch-up in order to get additional funding. But if you ask the member from Saltcoats, who's got a lot of experience on rural municipal government, he should be able to straighten you out on this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

McDowell Report

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier. Mr. Premier, one of the authors of the McDowell Committee report has now expressed his concern that the July 1 implementation has led to an unintended, one-time pay hike for MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly). Art Wakabayashi says that it was the intention of the committee that the recommendations be implemented earlier, before the legislative session began.

Mr. Premier, it is now clear that it was never the intention of the McDowell Committee to give a $4,400 windfall to MLAs. Would you follow the example that members of our caucus have set. Will you and your NDP MLAs do the right thing and give up the $4,400 increase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've gone over this several times in this House. And given that the member opposite was present at the meeting where we discussed it and voted in support of both the report and the implementation date, it's passing odd that he chooses to grandstand on this issue at this point. But I guess he wants to distract us from other matters that lay within his own backyard.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, I would say that clearly all members of this legislature, over their term of being elected, will take a substantial decrease in pay. Even considering the amount that he refers to, it's a net decrease of approximately $4,000 over the term of our election for every single member of this House. And I don't know why the member continues to portray it as otherwise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, this is now day 36 of the legislative session. If you check with the Clerk's office, you will find that the PC (Progressive Conservative) MLAs didn't claim one cent in per diems for the first 28 days of this session. That means that we've already given up the pay hike. We didn't need to have a Board of Internal Economy meeting to do it. We didn't need any further clarification, like the Liberals are using as an excuse. We went right ahead and gave this money up because it's the right thing to do.

Mr. Premier, I challenge you to show some leadership and do the right thing. Mr. Premier, one of the very people who sat on the McDowell Committee has said that there was never intended that the MLAs receive a pay hike. Will you give it up, or do you intend to keep this $4,400 bonus while you continue to impose sacrifices on other Saskatchewan residents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what to do with this member's continual attempts at creative bookkeeping. As you know and as other people know, and people who I have explained this to understand when I explain it, our pay is not the same month by month by month. So what he's done is he's taken the two highest end months and lumped them in with the beginning of the McDowell, and he's misrepresented it as an increase.

It is clearly a decrease. All the figures we've received on the matter show that it's clearly a decrease. And not only is it a decrease now, but it follows a 5 per cent decrease in cabinet pay; no increments of any kind to any elected members since 1991; a 2 per cent permanent decrease in pay. And I guess if any other people who are working anywhere would like to line up for these same benefits, a permanent 2 per cent decrease in pay is what we've got, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grid Road Maintenance

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Municipal Government about sacrifices being made by rural municipalities. Madam Minister, people in my riding and indeed across this entire province are extremely concerned about the rapid deterioration of our grid road system.

The province is supposed to be cost-sharing the maintenance and upgrading of this road system. But your efforts to download everything onto the municipalities, in doing that you have abandoned your responsibilities. You have lowered the cap on the RM construction for this year. And that leaves many RMs without enough money to compensate them for previous road construction, and no money at all for this year's construction.

The Minister of Highways talks about futures. Those futures are monies that have already been paid out by the RM and are supposed to be compensated by the provincial government. Madam Minister, why are you abandoning this important responsibility? Isn't it simply another case of an attack on rural Saskatchewan by your government?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I wish the member opposite would talk with his rural municipalities and with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), and talk about futures. Certainly there are some rural municipalities that have gone into futures to upgrade their roads; some have not. So some can construct roads this year, some cannot. But the funding from the province has not decreased. We still fund between 50 and 80 per cent of the designated road system, and there are 53,000 kilometres of that system.

The system is certainly under attack by the change, the federal government deregulation to transportation. Mr. Goodale allows railways to abandon branch lines. The grain elevator companies are rationalizing their system. Certainly there is a lot of concern on our rural roads.

But by working together, rural municipalities and the Department of Highways, hopefully we can address, as best we can with the limited funds that we have, those concerns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I reiterate that the futures have dropped from $60,000 a year to $24,000 a year for this RM. And that's money that the RMs have already spent that you're supposed to be repaying them.

My RM administrator in my riding has said that under this new cap they will only be able to afford to replace roads every 30 to 40 years, instead of the 15 to 20 years that is needed. And many of the roads in my constituency, and indeed a number of the constituencies across the province, need to be replaced right now.

Where are the RMs supposed to get the money with a 25 per cent revenue-sharing cut looming next year. In fact the reeve of the RM of Storthoaks says that it would add another 10 to 20 mills to address this shortfall by the RMs. And that would simply drive more young farmers out of the RMs.

Mr. Minister, you are abandoning your responsibilities and destroying the rural road system, the infrastructure leading to our highway system. And again I ask you, isn't this simply another step in your master plan to depopulate rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you to the member opposite. I explained to him a few minutes ago that there's been some federal decisions in transportation. There's some rationalization by the elevator companies. Certainly the economy of the province is growing rapidly in oil and mining and in forestry, causing pressure on our roads. It's very important for rural municipalities and the government to work together to address these concerns.

But I want to say to the member opposite, if we had the $850 million in interest that we pay each year by those members in

the third party, Mr. Speaker, we would be able to do a lot better on our roads. But we have to live with the existing situation, and we are prepared to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Removal of Maintenance Access Easements

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your government is proposing changes that would allow the courts to terminate conservation easements where the continuation of the easement would produce a severe hardship for the applicant. Eugene Zagrodney of the Kelvington Conservation and Development Authority says the authorities will need a system to protect and maintain their investments and the neighbouring landowners from future flooding if the drainage systems are allowed to plug up because of the removal of an easement. Easements are needed to allow access for maintenance.

Will the minister explain how the government will address situations in which an easement is removed and C&D (conservation and development) authorities must still maintain their constructed works?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would want to say to the member opposite that we, on an ongoing basis, attempt to work with municipal governments and other bodies who have been put in place throughout this province. And I can give the member the commitment that this government will continue to do that with this issue, as we do with others, on an ongoing basis.

If the member has a specific problem, I am certainly more than willing to have a look at it. If she would want to bring it to my attention after question period, we would deal with it in a very expedient manner.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Treaty Land Entitlements

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, as members of this House are aware, the treaty land entitlement process is creating concern among Saskatchewan's conservation and development authorities. The concern revolves around the fact that, under this process, native bands can buy land that they were promised under treaties. And once the land is purchased, the respective bands can apply for reserve status.

That means conservation and development authorities will not be able to tax such lands for the construction or maintenance of drainage systems. Nor will they be able to access such lands to ensure drainage systems are properly maintained.

Will the minister in charge of Sask Water explain how the government plans on dealing with those concerns?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that, as changes with respect to land ownership and first nations people acquire land, that these sorts of issues will be dealt with through negotiations, as we do with other issues.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member that this government has been cooperating with first nations government structures. We've been cooperating with the conservation authorities. We work very closely with them. And on this issue we will continue to as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, another concern being registered about the current treaty land entitlement process is the fact that lands purchased by Indian bands and granted reserve status cannot be taxed by municipal governments. Mr. Speaker, the framework agreement signed in 1992 regarding TLE (treaty land entitlement) lands provides municipalities with a one-time compensation payment. Will the minister assure conservation and development authorities that they will also receive some form of compensation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter on which we've met several times with SARM and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), not specifically related to the conservation authorities but related to the issue of tax laws compensation. And we are united and the Indian bands are united on this matter.

We've had a little more difficulty with the federal government in having them meet their obligations on tax laws compensation. So I appreciate your comments today because I've met recently with Mr. Goodale on this matter, and all the support we can get is appreciated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Prostitution

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, child prostitution continues to be a severe problem in Saskatchewan. Saskatoon City Council has now released its *Task Force Report on Child Prostitution*. Saskatoon Mayor Henry Dayday writes in the report:

> Each of the three players in child prostitution — the prostitute, the pimps, and the customers — need to be dealt with by our community in different ways.

Child prostitutes are often the victims of poverty as well as sexual abuse at the hands of those who hire them for sex.

Mr. Speaker, considering the gravity of this situation, will this government assure the people of this province that new and effective programs to assess the needs and consequently meet the needs of Saskatchewan's troubled street youth be put in place immediately.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question. Our government has been working very closely with the group, the task force, in Saskatoon. As stated last week, we've been involved in Regina in assessing and dealing with a number of the issues relating to street youths.

This is an ongoing concern of this government. We are working in a number of areas and it is a high priority. We have the children's action plan, which has attempted to have people work together from different departments from within the community, and there are many other initiatives which we are working with.

If there are suggestions that the hon. member has that are in addition to these, then we would be happy to receive them. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the law stands, if a child under the age of 12 is picked up on the streets, he or she cannot be charged or detained and is usually returned home to the parents. While in an ideal situation the family would be the ones most able to help the troubled youths, this is rarely the case for street kids. To add to the problems, johns who pick up child prostitutes are rarely charged.

Will this government, this Premier, this Minister of Justice, promptly address these grave social concerns and not only help these poor children, but impose laws that charge johns not only with soliciting a prostitute but also with sexual assault?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question as well. The whole issue is related to federal law and Mr. Allan Rock and the Department of Justice. The issues that she is addressing relate to changes to the Criminal Code, and there are many suggestions in this area that have been discussed at various levels.

But practically, here in Saskatchewan, we are working on the many coordinated efforts that we have, and we will continue to do that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government cannot deny its influence on the courts. When there was a rash of stolen cars in Regina in 1994, the Justice minister at the time and the police department put pressure on provincial judges to get tough with young offenders. That was an issue over stolen property. Child prostitution is an issue of stolen youth.

Will the Justice minister encourage our judges to take a hard line with pimps and customers of child prostitutes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the further comment. On this issue, I would also encourage her to table a letter that she has written to Mr. Allan Rock about this issue, which is a federal concern as it relates to the Criminal Code.

Here in Saskatchewan, we are working very carefully to look at the total problem. It's a complex issue. It involved Social Services. It involves Justice. It involves Health. It involves the whole community.

We are in a position where in Regina and in Saskatoon, we have community groups who are making many suggestions about what to do. Now included in the Saskatoon report are some suggestions that will come to the Department of Justice, and we have been working together with these groups, and we will take these recommendations and use them as appropriate. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 78 — An Act to enable Northern Municipalities to Name Airports within their boundaries

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that a Bill to enable Northern Municipalities to Name Airports within their boundaries be introduced and read a first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 03 — An Act to Amend The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Act

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill No. 03, An Act to Amend The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Act be read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 5 — Post-Secondary Education and Training Funding

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today in support of the Saskatchewan government's priorities for post-secondary education and training. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move the following motion:

That this Assembly commend the Saskatchewan government's funding priority in the March 28 budget for post-secondary education and training; and that this Assembly condemns the federal Liberal government's attack on students through the Canada Health and Social Transfer, CHST, and UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) cuts.

Mr. Speaker, as a parent, an educator, and a legislator, I am proud of our provincial government's priority to fund post-secondary education and skills training institutions at the same level as in 1995-96 — $228.8 million.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am appalled that the federal Liberal government would slash funding to post-secondary education. Yes, slash funding not only through reductions in CHST payments, which totalled $15.1 million in '96-97, but also in unemployment insurance changes which impact on Saskatchewan over $31 million. That includes withdrawal of a number of training allowances.

The direct impact on SIAST is 11.4 million. The direct impact on community colleges is $6 million.

The federal government has also given notice that they are withdrawing funding from apprenticeship programs over the next three years — another impact of over $4 million. The federal Liberals, who campaigned on jobs and training, are slashing funding to post-secondary education and training at unprecedented levels. These cuts are attacking the future of our students and our country.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to present more background to the federal Liberals' funding cuts and their impact on post-secondary education and training, and then, secondly, explain Saskatchewan's way of responding and setting priorities in funding.

Canada's social programs help to distinguish us from other nations, and they help to identify what it is to be Canadian. Federal payments or transfers to provinces have been instrumental in establishing the social programs currently in place. I think it is important for everyone to understand how this funding has changed and the implications it has on education and social programs.

Federal transfer programs — in 1995-96, there were three major federal transfer programs in place: equalization, which was formally introduced in 1957; Canada Assistance Plan, CAP, which commenced in 1966; and established program funding, EPF (established programs financing), which commenced in 1977.

Taken together, these three programs help to ensure that truly national health, education, social assistance, and other programs are available to all Canadians. They ensure quality post-secondary education. They have been fundamental in enabling provinces to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities to deliver programs and in protecting and enhancing the social fabric that defines Canada. However federal funding restrictions on these programs during the 1980s and 1990s, and now the introduction of CHST, are drawing into question the ability of provinces to maintain quality, national programs.

In one form or another, equalization has been part of the Canadian fiscal system since Confederation. The program was formally introduced in 1957, and the principle of equalization was enshrined in the constitutional Act of 1982 as a federal responsibility. The program was intended to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenue to provide reasonably comparable services without having to resort to excessive levels of taxation.

Through a complex formula, the revenue-raising ability or the fiscal capacity of each province is measured and then compared to other provinces. If a province is determined to have below average fiscal capacity, it is considered a have-not province and receives equalization payments from the federal government. The level of federal payment to a have-not or recipient province is determined by measuring that province's fiscal capacity against a five-province standard. Prior to 1982, provinces were compared to a more representative standard involving all 10 provinces.

Currently seven provinces receive equalization payments. When a province's economy grows relative to the five-province standard, the equalization program responds by reducing that province's payments or entitlements. Due to this feature, Saskatchewan's equalization entitlements have declined recently.

Of the seven recipient provinces, Saskatchewan receives the least amount of equalization payments on a per capita basis. This is an improvement from 1990-91, when Saskatchewan received $536 per capita, to today, 1995-96, receiving $381 per person. This improvement is due to the strength and diversification of the Saskatchewan economy.

And so we do not complain that we are getting less funding through equalization because this is a sign that our economy is improving. Overall, it's a good endorsement of our province's economic strategy, and as we gain economic strength, we receive less money through equalization, so there is a balancing.

We do not gain on the revenue side, but we are not critical of the federal government for less money through equalization, although we feel that it should go back to a ten-province standard rather a six-province standard. But what we do have a problem with is the replacement of CAP and EPF by CHST.

CAP, the Canadian Assistance Plan, which was a program to redistribute income to those who are in need, and EPF, established program funding, a program for cost-sharing hospital insurance, medicare, and post-secondary education, were replaced with Canada Health and Social Transfer — CHST.

The 1995 federal Liberal government budget replaced CAP and EPF with CHST, a way to slash social programs and educational opportunities to our students.

Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberal government introduced dramatic reductions in the level of federal support for Canada's social programs. This new program which delivers the federal government's financial commitment to health, post-secondary education, and social assistance, also signifies a fundamental change in the manner in which the federal government will pursue its national equity and income redistribution objectives.

Unlike CAP, the CHST will no longer provide an increase in federal funding for social assistance during periods of economic downturn when assistance is needed most.

The 1996 federal budget contained further changes to the CHST. It introduced a five-year funding commitment, an $11 billion cash floor that will be legislated.

Mr. Speaker, in 1995-96, Saskatchewan will incur a reduction in cash transfers of $114 million; in 1996-97, a continued reduction of 206 million, in '97-98 and a reduction of about $250 million annually over the term.

When I think of a chest, I think of a chest of treasures and hope for the future. But the CHST created by the federal Liberals robs our youth and our country. It is an attack on our social, on our educational, programs, and on our Canadian identity.

And when does this withdrawal of funding to CHST stop. Based on the federal government's own projections, the cash transfer decline will continue to the year 2002-2003. By 2002-2003, cash transfers will be $8 billion lower than they were in '95-96 — a 48.2 per cent decline. Cash transfers to the province of Saskatchewan will decline from $624 million in '95-96 to 377 million by 2002-3.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me just review the federal way of putting their finances in order and what their priorities are. Their priorities in cutting expenditures is to cut education and training, health, and social programs. Over 75 per cent of their redirection in spending is targeted to these programs — programs which account for only about 15 per cent of federal spending. And by 1997-98 it will . . . 79.4 per cent of the redirection in federal program spending will be from CHST.

In addressing its deficit problem the federal government has not only a deficit of money but a deficit of thought and ideas. The federal Liberals should reduce the cost of their own government operations; eliminate areas of federal spending having limited public value. One suggestion I would have would be the Senate. I think it would qualify.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Ms. Bradley: — The federal Liberal government should work with provinces to weed out areas of overlap and duplication. But we do not, as a provincial government, seek revenge on our students, on our future.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to spend some time on how our government responded to this attack on post-secondary education. First, we responded by back-filling the federal Liberal cuts to post-secondary education. Mr. Speaker, this is not an easy task when not only are the federal Liberals reducing money to post-secondary education but are cutting money to health, social programs, agriculture programs, unemployment changes, treaty Indians, policing, housing, not even to mention the abolishment of the Crow rate — hundreds of millions of dollars of less money coming to the province of Saskatchewan.

But our government in this year's budget, made a commitment to post-secondary education. Mr. Speaker, I first want to concentrate on the universities. This year's provincial budget did not reduce operating grants to the universities. But we had to tell the two universities that the amount of money that this government is able to commit to university funding would have to be reduced by $5 million in the next year, and by a further 5 million in '98-99. Mr. Speaker, we have given the universities time and support to meet these funding redirections.

The universities can work with it, Mr. Speaker, and they are busily engaged now on two fronts in order to realize the cost savings and the efficiencies they're going to have to realize. They're not approaching it, Mr. Speaker, as a cost-cutting, expense reduction exercise; they're taking the approach that they will positively review their programs and positively restructure their institutions with a view to positioning themselves to be financially viable in the long term.

So it's not just purely a negative, cost-cutting exercise so far as the universities are concerned, but an opportunity to review their programing and to make the kind of changes that can be made and ought to be made at the university so that they will be relevant, viable, vibrant, renewed institutions serving the province of Saskatchewan and available for the students in this province to get a university education. The University of Saskatchewan Students Union expressed it well — The path is clear; we must reinvent our university; the time has come for real change.

Mr. Speaker, I now would like to turn to the situation at SIAST. You may have also noticed that in the budget, that the SIAST funding is level for the '96-97 fiscal year. That is, level compared to the year just ended. And we have committed to SIAST that the funding will remain level for the two following years. So they look forward to three years of level funding so far as the province is concerned.

And the reason we did that is because they're already being hit quite hard by the changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act that were announced by Lloyd Axworthy last November. Now those changes impact on Saskatchewan to the tune of about $31 million. That includes the withdrawal of a number of training allowances and those types of supports for individual people.

But it also impacts directly on SIAST to the extent of about $11.4 million — $11.4 million is a lot of pain for SIAST to have to cope with, a lot of adjustments that will be necessary. There will . . . put quite enough pressure on them as an institution to adjust to that particular drop in financing. And so we maintained their funding on a level basis over the three-year period so that they can be secure in that funding and can turn

their attention to how they're going to cope with the changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a word about regional colleges. The regional colleges, a matter of great interest to all of us I think, they are a remarkably flexible and effective instrument in this province and have been for a long time. They're able to put more training on the ground faster than any institution, I think in the country. And it is their wonderful flexibility and responsiveness that makes them stand out above any other institution that I can think of.

And that, I believe, Mr. Speaker, is worth preserving, and it's worth building on. Their funding is going to be level for this year and the next two years after that. At the same time they have problems because of the changes to the federal training approach. The UIC changes will impact on community colleges to the tune of something like a total of $6 million. And that will chiefly be the federal dollars not being there to buy training seats or to buy training from the regional colleges. We are not able to back-fill behind that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention again about apprenticeship. Apprenticeship money is also being withdrawn over the next three years by the federal government. Our apprenticeship program in this province has been jointly funded — 60 per cent federal, 40 per cent provincial. This withdrawal of money is a $4 million impact. This year the funding has remained stable, but we must find ways to keep a viable, workable apprenticeship program in our province.

Work-based training is essential, and it has proven to be successful. We will be consulting with the affected community in order to work out an apprenticeship training program for the future.

Mr. Speaker, the Future Skills and JobStart programs are also closely linked to economic growth. They were designed to foster partnership with industry and small business to ensure skilled labour force for this provincial economy. The JobStart program focused on training programs for youth. And to date more than 2,200 jobs, training and employment positions, have been approved under Future Skills and JobStart.

These programs have been very successful in helping those with the most difficulties to get training and employment. The programs were well received by employers, particularly smaller employers. The program fostered partnerships between SIAST, regional colleges, and employers. This resulted in new approaches to program delivery, and new programs were designed to meet the training needs of the employers.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is seeking and finding solutions. Our solution is not just to slash funding.

Mr. Speaker, I just recently read a paper that was part of a lecture series. The subject was "Social Dimensions of Economic Growth", presented by Judith Maxwell, president of the Canadian Policy Research Networks, Ottawa. The lecture was presented at the University of Alberta at Edmonton, department of economics.

I found it very interesting as it discussed the interdependence of economic and social policy. In summary, Judith Maxwell gives convincing evidence that economic growth in the long term depends on the investment we make in human and social capital, as she says it, in the resilience of Canadian citizens. She says that Canada has two choices, two concepts for the future: either polarization or resilience.

The polarization scenario does not need much further description. It already exists to a significant degree in United States where the middle class seems to be congregating in gated communities, while the marginalized are concentrated in burned-out inner cities. In this scenario, the social safety net is gutted, and no new techniques are found to build bridges from bad jobs to good jobs. New pools of poverty build up around young families. This in turn will foster crime and other social pathologies which lead to greater government spending on fighting crime, protecting property, and combating racism.

This is not a route that any Canadian would choose deliberately. But I believe our federal government has chosen this route.

Then Judith Maxwell goes on to explain the second choice, one of resilience. The cornerstones of a resilient society — a resilient society is a learning society. Education and training are regarded as an investment to be financed by students, families, taxpayers, employers, and employees. Learning takes place from cradle to grave: in the home, in the school, in the community, and in the workplace. A resilient society values the caring role of the family. That role is reinforced by thoughtful and supportive public policy. A resilient society evaluates its progress by tracking outcomes, not how much it spends. A resilient society protects and nurtures its social capital.

She then goes on to say that the straight-line cutting of the old safety net programs will push Canada further down the road of polarization, that it will take an act of political will to divert some of the money from program cuts into new public priorities, the cornerstones of a resilient society.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the province of Saskatchewan has protected public priorities, the cornerstones of a resilient society, whereas the slash-and-cut policies of the federal Liberals will lead us to a society of polarization, a society in which the gaps will be larger between the have's and the have-not's.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to the highest quality post-secondary institutions that we can afford to have. Post-secondary education is a priority of our government. We understand the importance of the quality of education to our students, our communities, our province, and our country. Education is the foundation of our future. We must do the very best for our children, their children, and all of the citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to the citizens of our province. But I am appalled that the federal government would prefer to listen to their big-business interests than the people of Canada, the students of Canada. In Saskatchewan we understand that

social and economic policies work hand in hand, that education is a cornerstone to build a more resilient, productive, and caring society.

Mr. Speaker, I only wish that the federal Liberal government would direct their energy to the priorities of Canadian people, our youth, our students, in building a better future for all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to move the following motion:

> That this Assembly commend the Saskatchewan government's funding priority in the March 28 budget for post-secondary education and training; and that this Assembly condemns the federal Liberal government's attack on students through their Canada Health and Social Transfer and UIC cuts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — And it will be seconded by Regina Lumsden.

(1445)

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'm pleased to say a few words in support of the motion presented by my colleague, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. In fact I'll be proud to do that.

We all know that the federal government is facing a huge deficit and a staggering debt. We also realize that they must come to terms with that debt and that deficit, that they have to work to reduce those debts and eventually eliminate them in order to be seen as a credible and accountable government.

Now we in Saskatchewan understand that problem. When New Democrats formed government in 1991, we too faced an enormous deficit — almost a billion dollars — and a huge debt. But here is where the federal Liberals and the provincial New Democrats differ. Here is where we chose very, very different paths.

With the help and support of Saskatchewan people and the sacrifice of Saskatchewan people, we laid out a four-year plan to eliminate the deficit and to begin to reduce the enormous debt. And we laid out a plan to balance the budget, but we did it in a way that reflected the values of Saskatchewan people — our values of caring and compassion. It wasn't easy, but we did it. We delivered a balanced budget while maintaining our commitment to health, education, and social programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — As I said, it was not easy, but Saskatchewan did it.

And then along comes Mr. Martin with this year's federal budget, the end of established program funding, and instead we have Canadian Health and Social Transfer. This meant cuts in federal transfer payments, cuts every year for the next four years until, by the year 1999-2000, the cuts will be over one-quarter of a billion dollars a year — a quarter of a billion dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker — a quarter of a billion dollars less for health, for education, and for social programs.

As a result of those cuts, the people of Saskatchewan were apprehensive about our provincial budget. How would we adapt? They understood the seriousness of these cuts and the potentially devastating effect on our province. But, Mr. Speaker, this government shares with the people of this fine province a commitment to education, health, and social programs. And in our provincial budget, delivered March 28, despite these Draconian federal cuts in our provincial budget, we provided $110 million of new provincial funding to replace the '96-97 federal cuts. The budget back-filled 100 per cent of the federal cuts to operating funding of our post-secondary institutions.

And Saskatchewan's four-year financial plan will provide, by the year 1999-2000, a total of $242 million of new provincial funding. That represents 96 per cent of the announced federal transfer payment cuts. We will put back 96 cents for every dollar cut by the federal government. And we are all very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

This has required some tough choices and this has required some tough decisions, but we have chosen to protect our education system. We have chosen to protect vulnerable people like our students. The federal government has withdrawn from training programs, partly through changes in unemployment insurance announced last November. And as the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy said, this means a decrease in revenue for SIAST of about 14 per cent, or $11.4 million. And this means a decrease of 25 per cent for the regional colleges, or about $6 million.

But our budget maintains provincial funding to all our training programs this year, in addition to maintaining operating grants to institutions. We are committed to shielding our education partners from the full impact of these federal cuts. We want to give our education partners time to prepare for the challenges of the new century.

To ensure that the reinvigorated post-secondary system of the 21st century will be responsive to student needs, we are developing a made-in-Saskatchewan training strategy. And we will be doing this in consultation with students, faculty, industry, and other partners. We are helping facilitate the revitalization of our universities through the appointment of Harold MacKay, a special ministerial representative.

The budget affirms financial support for needy post-secondary students through the Saskatchewan student loans program which has been streamlined and improved. And the budget also provides funding for summer employment programs.

The provincial training strategy and renewal of our post-secondary institutions will help ensure that an effective, sustainable system is in place to support economic and social development and jobs for Saskatchewan people. They underline our commitment to a full employability strategy.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people asked us in our consultations throughout the province to maintain our health, education, and social programs. They asked us to shield them from the federal cuts. And we have done that.

Mr. Speaker, while we applaud the federal government's resolve to reduce the deficit, we do not applaud their approach. We do not support their way of doing it. Their way is to make 75 per cent of their cuts to health, education, and social programs. We believe this is the wrong way. We believe these are the wrong choices for Canada. We believe these are the wrong choices for Saskatchewan.

The post-secondary system must first meet the needs of students, not compromise their ability to further their education by cutting funding, as the federal Liberals have done. The wrong choices, for the wrong reasons, at precisely the wrong time for Canadians.

We believe in working with Saskatchewan people and our post-secondary partners to build a better, sustainable system. And we are doing just that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are doing it the Saskatchewan way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to speak in support of this motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I feel it an absolute necessity that I address the member's motion today, particularly because it is nothing but a desperate attempt to deflect responsibility. I imagine the member's speech was supposed to make us feel sorry for her poor government — the big, bad feds are out to attack post-secondary students, and the provincial government is helpless to do anything.

Mr. Speaker, I have two children, and I see this same tactic used at home all the time. Whenever something bad happens, they can't blame each other fast enough. No one wants to take responsibility. So they start pointing the finger at the most convenient target. Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems that this "not me" defence isn't just used by my children; it is used by the government as well.

Since long before this session opened, the members opposite have been blaming the federal government for every piece of bad news they possibly can. Even when, or should I say especially when, they should be the ones taking responsibility. Instead they start chanting, day in and day out, blame the feds. Today we see they've even decided to make a private member's motion out of the tired old song.

It's bad enough that we have to hear the same tedious refrain day after day. What's even worse though is that they change the tune whenever it is most convenient. We've received more than one of this government's press releases announcing a program that is good for Saskatchewan people, funded by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring to the attention of the House that in my own constituency, the renovation of the Norquay Health Centre is taking place, a health centre that used to be a hospital and was one of the 52 closed. And I note that the cost of this renovation is in excess of $600,000, and I note also that the federal government is contributing $150,000 to this project — great cooperation between the village of Norquay, the provincial government, and the federal government.

They're certainly willing to share the spotlight with the federal program in this case. But when it comes to cuts to Saskatchewan programs made by the NDP government, the members opposite quickly step off the stage and resume their "not me" chants. That's a cowardly way to govern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan deserve so much more.

Seniors who are losing access to health care in their communities because this government has hacked away at hospitals deserve more. Rural residents who are forced to watch as the government closes Crop Insurance offices, rural service centres and Highway offices deserve so much more. School children, teachers, and parents, who will see school programs and resources disappear deserve so much more. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the very students the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy just talked about deserve so much more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's take a look at the wording of the member's motion. The first part says we should:

> . . . commend the Saskatchewan government's funding priority in the March 28 budget for post-secondary education and training . . .

Do they really want us to give them a commendation when only 37 per cent of the people in this province say they approve of the way Saskatchewan's provincial government is managing post-secondary education? Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a statement from the government's own public opinion poll released a couple of weeks ago. Only 37 per cent approve of this government's handling of post-secondary education. That's not something our caucus or anyone in this House should be proud of.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gets worse. The same public opinion poll states that parents of children currently enrolled in elementary or secondary school are somewhat less likely than other residents to approve of the provincial government's management of post-secondary education. That doesn't bode well for our future, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The very people who will see their children relying on post-secondary education are the most pessimistic. That's something this government should listen to.

I don't know if the members opposite read the poll, so let me emphasize that these people disapprove of the provincial government's management. Now what are the members going to do? They'll probably try to chant their "not me" song. But I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it just doesn't wash.

This government, the provincial government, is the one who

put together the budget for both K to 12 and post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. Still, they want us to commend them.

Wait. Maybe they want us to commend their priority of creating more government bureaucracy. Maybe they want us to applaud because they split Education into two departments and gave Post-Secondary its own complete minister, complete with staff and expenses, all from the taxpayers' pockets.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we would be hard-pressed to support this when we see our own constituents losing their jobs, their access to health care, and the lifeblood of their communities. No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can't commend this government's priorities when we see government waste everywhere, and post-secondary education is no exception.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we must deal with the second half of the member's motion which states that we should condemn "the federal Liberal government's attack on students through their Canada Health and Social Transfer and the UIC cuts."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to have a chance to address the numbers that the NDP government has been carelessly tossing out to explain every bad decision they make. The government's "not me" refrain includes numbers, and the members opposite make every effort to manipulate Saskatchewan people with those numbers.

(1500)

Before session even began, the Social Services minister, the Health minister, the Education minister, and possibly even all the other ministers, were all claiming that their own departments would be taking a $106 million cut. If you believe the advertisements in the newspapers and the ministers' own comments, it sounded like the provincial government was indeed hard done by and that they were each taking $100 million losses this year alone.

Well, that's just not true, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm not denying that the federal government cut federal transfers to Saskatchewan, but let's get the figures straight. In '96-97, transfers will decline by $61 million. In 1997-98, transfers will be $60 million less. But in 1998-99, transfers will go up by $15 million.

That means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that between this year and 1999 — that's three years — Saskatchewan will see a total difference of only $106 million. That's one total. That's one total, Mr. Deputy Speaker, passed from the federal government to this provincial government.

This means that all of the ministers claiming to single-handedly take the losses are deceiving the public. Why? It was a convenient excuse to pass the buck, I guess. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the buck has to stop somewhere, and in this case it should stop with the members opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the most ridiculous argument that comes out of the NDP government's finger-pointing defence was from the Finance minister. She seemed to think that if Saskatchewan becomes a have province, that's a bad thing.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we think it would be a wonderful thing. And if this government would take action to encourage economic growth instead of just paying it lip-service, we might be much further along the path to prosperity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not going to deny that this government was faced with problems when they took office in 1991. I'm fully aware that the Tory administration of the '80s dragged our province down with their irresponsible spending policies. And I know that digging out from under the mountains of old debt will not be easy. But at some point, the NDP government has to start taking responsibility for the decisions made in the past five years.

They have to admit that they chose to shut down 52 rural hospitals and that they will choose to close down the Plains Health Centre. They have to own up to the people of this province that the NDP government decided to shut down Crop Insurance and Agricultural Credit Corporation offices. If rural municipalities are forced to amalgamate, the government must step forward and acknowledge that this was their choice.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if post-secondary education loses resources, staff, and programs, it must be the provincial government that takes responsibility. Yes, SIAST students were relieved this year. They were told to expect the worst but then the government gave them a break. It was a vicious game that this government chose to play. They spread a thick fog of threatened cuts over the education system and then played hero when the budget lifted that fog for this year at least.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our education system is too important to fall victim to intimidating government games, and although this year post-secondary was spared, I have little confidence that it will continue to be spared in the future. Unfortunately it will be our young people, the very young people who want to learn and to take our province into the next century, that will suffer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our caucus wants to see Saskatchewan prosper. We want to see the economy grow. We want to see an abundance of jobs, a strong business climate, and healthy competition in all industries. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to see the youth of this province face a future full of promise, hope, and opportunity. I can't emphasize enough how important education is to our future.

The Premier's words of 1990 will continue to haunt him because for once, we strongly support him. He said, increased education is a priority; all I can say is we will simply have to find more money. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier said that when he was in opposition. Now that he's in government, he's in a position to do something about it. I hope for the sake of our young people, that he hasn't changed his mind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's time to stop playing the blame game. It's time to stop pointing the fingers down east. The decisions are made in this building here by the members on that side of

the floor. The member's motion is nothing but a ridiculous way to give the members opposite a fed-bashing free-for-all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, introducing a motion like this is cheap politics; and whether the member came up with the idea on her own, or whether it was a directive from the NDP powers that be, it is a motion that does not deserve the time or energy. Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that every day we have to listen to the government members chide us for supporting our federal cousins in Ottawa, now we have to listen to it . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: —Now we have to listen to it on the afternoon of private members' day. I would like to ask the members opposite to ask themselves, if the federal government is so awful, why do they have such a wide base of support across the country? Five of six by-elections just went to the Liberals. I don't recall any of those seats going to the NDP. In fact the only NDP stories we read in the paper involve the words "bingo" and "scandal".

So maybe we defend our federal cousins because they're worth defending on many, many issues. Maybe we defend them because we listen to our constituents, and that is what our constituents want. Mr. Speaker, when we were elected, we made a commitment to represent our constituents on every issue, and that is what we will continue to do.

For the reasons I've just outlined, there is absolutely no way our caucus can support the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy on her statement. In fact I would propose that the Assembly adopt the following amendment to the statement which we feel more accurately reflects the situation of post-secondary education in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member from Humboldt:

> That all words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following words substituted therefor:
>
> condemns the provincial government for failing to accept responsibility for post-secondary education and training in our province and for continuing to blame the federal government for a situation that is wholly under the control of the provincial government.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to rise this afternoon to take part in this debate concerning the federal government and its Canada Health and Social Transfers. We have all been sitting in this House over the past month and a half listening to members opposite condemn the federal government for cuts to health care, education, and social programs. These condemnations come for the most part during question period when the members opposite rely on blaming tactics, particularly targeting the federal government rather than taking responsibility for their own ineptitude and inability in priorizing the needs of the people of this province.

The money is there. The money is there. It is simply obvious, however, that the present NDP government and the Premier, for reasons unbeknown to us, choose not to use this money extracted from the taxpayers and the federal government for the well-being of the people of this province.

I would like to take this opportunity to lend some advice to members of our provincial government when it comes to allocation of finances from the federal government. We on this side of the House are often told by the NDP that we contradict ourselves. You accuse us of saying, spend more; then you're saying, spend less. But the real message we give to the NDP is straightforward and it is this: get your priorities straight.

We will never say don't spend at all, but we will tell the NDP to spend money wisely and to have a long, hard look at how your detrimental policies are affecting the health and well-being of the people of this province.

The people of Saskatchewan have had enough of the continual fed bashing. We ask you to reveal the complete truth regarding the finances available to you and get on with rebuilding this province in an effective and equitable manner.

The fiscal responsibility that has been demonstrated by this provincial government to date is the fault of the provincial government itself and no one else. The federal government is doing its part to secure Canada's health system and social safety net.

This year, the federal government is transferring 1.211 billion to Saskatchewan in total. Why is this government complaining about a reduction of less than 1.5 per cent to the province's total annual revenues? The 1.2 billion can be used at this government's discretion. If they choose to cut health, education, and social programs, it shows where their priorities are.

We, as the official opposition, urge this NDP administration to readjust your priorities to reflect the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan. In doing this, you would truly show that you care what happens to the people of this province.

The priorities of the people of Saskatchewan are not a bloated cabinet and record levels of political patronage. The people want a government that is responsible, that will not offload onto third parties and then blame the problems on the federal government.

I urge the members opposite to move their focus off of this one and a half per cent and onto the $1.2 billion that are being transferred from the federal government to Saskatchewan this year alone. The funding from the federal government continues to arrive at acceptable levels, and it is up to the provinces, on an individual basis, to make their own decisions on how to allocate federal funding in a fashion that will best meet the needs and priorities of the provinces.

The federal government is acting in ways to ensure the restoration of confidence of Canadians in our old age security system and to provide secure and growing support for medicare, social programs, and education.

Well I urge this government to change its focus. I ask them to focus on the windfall revenues that are coming out of our thriving oil and gas industries and our natural resources. Focus on the potential profitability of small business in rural Saskatchewan, and their potential impact on sustainable job creation in our province. Focus on your responsibility to allocate the resources that have been made available to you in a responsible way that reflects the priorities and needs of this province.

The federal Government of Canada continues to provide for the people of this country in a fiscally responsible way. One of the federal government's most important goals is to preserve and strengthen the social programs that the people of this country and this province have worked so hard to maintain.

Due to the rising age of the Canadian population, we all must work together now in order to ensure the sustainability of our social programs. The senior citizens of this province are our backbone and they deserve to be treated as such. How can we justify threatening to take away benefit programs and packages from the very people that founded this great province?

(1515)

The Saskatchewan Seniors Association in this province has time and again told this government how they would like money allocated for senior citizens to be spent. And time and time again, these people have been ignored by the Government of Saskatchewan. Social programs should not be viewed as costs. They are investments in the people and communities of this province.

What is the concern is the way in which this government makes changes and the way in which it blames the federal government when these changes end up costing the people of this province more in terms of the lack of job creation, the lack of adequate social programs for the people who need it, the lack of responsibility by the government of this province.

For seniors of the future, the federal government is ensuring today that benefits will be better targeted by providing more assistance to low income Canadians, and reducing assistance to those seniors with higher incomes. A new seniors' benefit will replace the existing Old Age Security and guaranteed income supplement beginning in 2001. This new system will be tax-free, paid out monthly, and will provide larger benefits for low income seniors. This system will be phased in in such a way so that today's seniors will not be caught in the middle and risk losing benefits. The new seniors' benefit will make the public pension system more affordable and sustainable.

The federal government is not only looking after the seniors of this province; it is also looking after the children. By implementing a new child support and maintenance system, as well as the working income supplement, the federal government is working hard to eliminate child poverty in this country. As stated in the *Poverty Profile*, 1994, that was put out by the National Council of Welfare this spring, the percentage of children living in poverty from all family types across Canada in 1994 was 19.1 per cent. The percentage for the same children in Saskatchewan was 22.4 per cent for 1994.

The numbers are too high, anyway you look at it. But this government should be working with the federal government to lower these numbers even further. There is no reason at all why Saskatchewan should have a higher child poverty rate than the national average. In fact in 1994, Saskatchewan's child poverty rate was one of the highest in Canada, second only to Newfoundland. There is no excuse for a province as rich in natural resources as Saskatchewan is to have such a high level of child poverty.

In the 1995-96 federal budget, the Canada Health and Social Transfer was created to consolidate federal transfers to the province in the form of tax points and cash. This new system, the system that the provincial government in this province complains bitterly about, provides the provinces more flexibility to better deliver social programs. Through the Canada Health and Social Transfer, stability and growth will be restored to transfers to provinces with a stable system of long-term funding for health care, education, and social assistance. The federal government will legislate a five-year CHST funding arrangement that is to begin in 1998-99. This system will reduce the current per capita disparities in funding that exist among provinces.

Over the past few months, concerns on the part of my constituents regarding this government's ineptitude in dealing with provincial issues have been pouring into my office. To top the list are concerns with health care, the future of care for seniors, and taxes. The people of rural Saskatchewan are being downtrodden by the lack of concern and poor choices that have been made by this provincial government over the past four years with regards to rural Saskatchewan. This NDP government by and large hails from urban centres and they have no concern for the people outside of these cities.

This government blames the federal government for cutting funding — that is, for cutting less than 1.5 per cent of the money that is available to this province for health care, social programs, and education. They blame the federal government for finding solutions to the rising cost of social services and health care. They blame the federal government for looking for ways to ensure the Canada Pension Plan will be available for our children to collect.

The problem with this provincial government's continual complaints about federal funding is that this government simply cannot accept the fact that Saskatchewan is growing up. This province is becoming more and more fiscally independent and therefore needs and deserves less from the federal parents of this province.

How can we as a province be seen as a fiscally mature province when every time something goes wrong we run to our federal father for more money and complain when we don't get it?

Regardless of political affiliation, all people of Saskatchewan suffer the effects of the careless decisions made by this NDP government, be it Crop Insurance closures, Highway depots, schools, hospitals, and the list goes on. People all across the province suffer the consequences.

It is due time that this NDP administration accept responsibility for the fiscal situation of our province. The federal government has not only maintained programs for the people of this country, it is taking steps to ensure that these programs will be available well into the next century.

As Saskatchewan moves from a have-not to a have province, there will be financial changes. It is time that this government accept responsibility for these changes and work within their means to provide all essential services for the people of this great province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to enter this debate this afternoon, particularly in light of the amendment and the comments from the member of Canora-Pelly and the member from Humboldt. I'm not sure whether I am in fact more disappointed with their comments and their ignorance of the real issues or whether in fact I'm simply angry at their decision to ignore them.

I want to start by refuting the argument put forward by these members opposite about the level of the cuts that Ottawa is delivering to this province's social programs. This is one of the most deceptive arguments that I have seen.

And it comes straight from the mouth, not of course of the members opposite because they wouldn't want to defend the federal government, but I'm reading here a letter from our good friend, Ralph Goodale, Member of Parliament from the same riding that covers much of the same area that my riding does.

Now he puts forward the same four arguments that we've heard opposite. He says in his letter in the *Leader-Post* on April 16, he says:

> . . . the three federal budgets from 1994 through 1996 were heralded nationally and internationally as (being) fiscally responsible . . .

Well I guess we could accept Mr. Goodale's word because when the last federal budget came down he didn't even bother to be in the country. He happened to be in Tokyo that day. So Mr. Goodale would know a lot about how these things are being received internationally.

He says:

> Second, Saskatchewan readily acknowledges it is vital to all Canadians for the federal government to battle the twin monsters of debt and deficit . . .

Now we hear the members opposite say, oh, you know, they've got a bad problem in Ottawa. They've got these cuts they've got to make because of the debt and the deficit. I'm sure if there was an NDP government at some point, they'd blame it on us. But we haven't governed federally. That debt and deficit was built up entirely — entirely — by Liberal and Tory governments.

Now let's just focus on this for a second. For 20 years we have seen those governments build up massive debts. In fact this year the Canadian debt will hit a $600 billion level — $600 billion.

An Hon. Member: — It's declining, isn't it?

Mr. Thomson: — It takes us . . . And it is a rising debt. And that is what the Liberals have done for Canada — $600 billion in debt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know the problems that you can run into by running significant debts and deficits. Saskatchewan had its problem with the deficits built up by the Conservative government of Grant Devine, and we know that what it does is it leads you to the edge of bankruptcy.

The problem is, and no one has a disagreement with the federal government attempting to deal with its debt problems, but in dealing with it, it's showing it's not only fiscally bankrupt, it is intellectually bankrupt and it is morally bankrupt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Let's take a look at the priorities of how they're trying to deal with that deficit and that debt.

The members opposite say, well we should be protecting seniors. I read here *The Globe and Mail* headlines: "Politicians hit road show for pension review"; "Pension plan fate subject to hearings"; "CPP cuts opposed"; "Pensioning off the CPP."

In this editorial *The Globe and Mail* says:

> Ottawa's travelling financial circus offers the masses not bread but pain and hard choices. Pain and hard choices for the seniors in our country, pain and hard choices for the people who are going to have to be paying the increased rates because of federal Liberal mismanagement.

Now it's nice to listen to the members opposite and the member for Humboldt stand up and talk about how we should be building this great, just society, this Trudeauesque vision. It is exactly that set of priorities which have led us to where we are today, which is a federal government that has no direction, that is lacking in integrity. It is lacking in much intellectual capital. It is fiscally bankrupt, and I would say it is lacking in moral standards.

Mr. Speaker, it is convenient for the members opposite to put forward a motion saying that Saskatchewan is responsible for all the problems the federal government is downloading, but it's inaccurate.

Let's take a look at exactly what they say their argument is as to

why, you know, the federal government is not offloading that much, they say. In Goodale's letter, he says:

> . . . the source of the current financial pressure on Saskatchewan is the 'lost decade' of gross mismanagement that plagued this province from 1982 to 1991."

Well that's a convenient argument. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that the problems forced on this province by the massive debts and debt built up by the Conservative government were brought in hand by the last legislature. It was in that legislature that we saw a balanced budget. It was in that legislature that we saw the choices made to help correct those problems. And as a result of those choices, Saskatchewan was put on a steady course to recovery.

The problem is Ottawa didn't bother to do anything about its problems. So this year we are all of a sudden faced with massive cuts through this CHST, the Canada Health and Social Transfer, or perhaps, Chrétien's heinous slashing of transfer payments. Maybe that's a better way for us to refer to the CHST.

But what we see here is $106 million offload this year, not over the next three years — this year, $106 million. It required us to rethink our priorities. I agree with that. We did sit down and rethink our priorities. And we said, unlike the federal government, we said health, education, and the protection of our poor were our top priorities, and we would ensure that the federal cuts did not hit them.

They go on to argue, the Liberals go on to argue, the unavoidable reductions, I'm quoting from the letter again:

> . . . unavoidable reductions in federal transfers to Saskatchewan will be relatively modest. Here are the major transfers this province can expect . . .

And he goes on to list the same figures the member for Canora-Pelly listed.

The problem is, in this wonderful accounting they're doing with their electric abacus across the way, is that they are forgetting that what they are calculating in is a concept called tax points. I'm sorry the member for Thunder Creek is not able to expound on this at this point, to tell us about how these great tax points have been such a benefit to us. Perhaps I can simply stand in and say that these tax points were a concept introduced in 1977, almost 20 years ago. It was a one-time shift from a federal tax base to the provincial tax base to cover a program called established programs financing — EPF. That happened in 1977.

There's been no tax point transfers since then. The federal government has eaten up all the additional tax room that they had ever given us. This is what the problem is with this argument. Not only is it misleading, not only is it deceptive, but it is inaccurate. And I think that it is shameful for people like the member for Humboldt to stand up and say, well the federal Liberals are protecting the poor, when they're not. The federal Liberals are protecting the elderly, when they're cutting CPP (Canada Pension Plan). The federal Liberals are protecting the ill, when they're cutting the transfers to health care. This is the most twisted logic that I have heard in this House yet.

And I think that it would befit the members opposite to sit back, rethink their position, and really join with us in talking about how we can stand up for Saskatchewan against Ottawa's cuts. It's convenient for the members opposite to say, oh well, yes, but there's all these other problems. Well it's not the issue of the federal government.

(1530)

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the federal government is offloading its spending on to us and it's doing so at the expense of the poor; it is doing so at the expense of the young; it is doing so at the expense of the ill. And since the members opposite seem to only like to talk about rural areas and forget about those of us who live in urban areas, I will tell you it is at the expense of people in rural communities.

Let me just use for an example on this, let's take a look at what exactly the changes are that they're making to Unemployment Insurance Act. Apart from the Canada Health and Social Transfers, they are in fact attacking this province and its people through other changes as well. They've introduced a new employment insurance Act. These changes, we know, will result in a more limited role for the federal government in implementing labour market policies. We know that it will narrow the definition of who can participate in the programs. They're going to increase the volume of social assistance recipients.

Now the member for Humboldt, who likes to stand up and on the one hand talk about poverty and on the other hand talk about no solutions for it, she offers no alternatives, no solution, no vision. But she likes to talk about the problem. The problem is the federal government continues to offload on social assistance funding. We take a look at the impact of this, and we know that there is potentially 5,000 fewer trainees who will be able to access training as a result of the federal government's offloading.

We know that through their changes to employment insurance, what we used to call UI (unemployment insurance), that they will particularly affect the re-entry of youth, of women, of aboriginal people and social assistance recipients into the workforce.

This is the real problem that's coming down from Ottawa. It's not just a case of the social transfers. It's a problem that we have with a variety of the legislation put forward — Bill C-96, Bill C-111, Bill C-112. These are all problems. And it's convenient for the members opposite to say, oh well, the real problem is that Saskatchewan is not spending enough on health care, education and social programing. The fact is we spend everything Ottawa gives us and more.

As a result of the cuts that the federal government is making, Saskatchewan will now have responsibility for 85 per cent of the funding of these social programs — 85 per cent of the funding will come directly from Saskatchewan taxpayers,

through Saskatchewan government.

That's the fact. Before the cuts, the amount was closer to 72, 73 per cent. This is a massive offload. Now the member opposite from Humboldt stood up, and following the great leadership of, I guess it was a one-time Liberal leader in this House, Mr. Goodale, says that in fact the offload is only 1.5 per cent of the total provincial budget.

That's using the complicated system of tax points; that 1977 program that we haven't seen since — but 1.5 per cent. But the fact is, and madam member across the way knows this, we are looking at offload equal to 5 per cent of the total program budget of the province. We are talking about an offload equal to 8 per cent of the money we spend on social programs. That's the problem.

I am pleased that the budget is balanced in this province. I am pleased that we have done that fairly, and I am particularly pleased that we have been able to find the money, as the member for Regina Qu'Appelle said, to replace the money offloaded by the federal government.

Those are our priorities. We believe in standing up for the people of Saskatchewan against these horrible cuts Ottawa's making.

Mr. Speaker, these cuts are going to have other problems in the post-secondary sector. I was somewhat disappointed to hear the comments from the member for Canora-Pelly who talked about the problems we have on our post-secondary sector. He puts forward an argument that says, well the cuts are not that severe; the problem is all Saskatchewan's fault. We've mismanaged it. We've wasted money. And yet when you question them on it, they can't provide a single example. They can't provide a single, solitary piece of fact to back up their arguments. It simply comes down to being political rhetoric.

Well let me talk a little bit about what the facts are on this. The fact is that Ottawa is going to be cutting more than $30 million out of the funding it puts into training programs — $30 million . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, this is not money that they are simply arbitrarily giving to us that we're somehow flitting away as the members opposite say. This is money they used to use to purchase seats in our technical institutes. This was money that went to skills training. Specifically it was $4 million in apprenticeship training. That's a $4 million cut to apprenticeship that the federal government is making.

Ten million dollars in adult basic education, $10 million, now this is to some of our poorest adults, some of the people who are trying to get off of welfare by upgrading their basic skills. Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberals and — I would hope — the Liberals opposite would know this is not acceptable. You can't simply tell people, get off of welfare. You have to give them the opportunity to improve themselves, to be able to enter the labour force and participate fully. That's what these funds used to go to. This is where the federal government is cutting back.

We're not talking about cutting back on the massive waste within their own government. We're not talking about, as the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy pointed out, the fact that they continue to maintain the Senate for their Liberal cronies. We're not even talking about the fact that they maintain 6,000 people in the Department of Health's bureaucracy in Ottawa.

What we're talking about here is a cut to adult basic education. We're talking about $10 million in additional cuts to vocational skills training — vocational skills training. And we're talking about $6 million cut to outreach programs for women, for the disabled, for first nations people, and the Metis.

So while the members opposite talk about all of these massive cuts that Saskatchewan is making, the fact is they're not, we are not making the cuts. We are standing up for Saskatchewan people. We are back-filling the cuts Ottawa is making. And by our very nature, we are protecting the people who need our protection most.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague, the member from Regina South, for the courtesy.

Mr. Speaker, it's always a great pleasure for all of us to introduce guests — student guests — in this legislature, and this is particularly true today because seated in your gallery we have some out-of-province students, Mr. Speaker.

We have 53 grade 7 to 12 students from Grenora School in Grenora, North Dakota. They are accompanied by their teacher Karen C. Helm, and their chaperons, Mr. and Mrs. Haugen, Mrs. Jacobson, Mrs. Rassmusson, Ms. Schultz, and Mr. and Mrs. Garass.

Now we are all very pleased to see them here and we will be interested to hear what they have to think about the proceedings in this House. And no doubt there will be comparisons that you'll want to make to your own state legislature. But I am delighted on behalf of my colleagues here to welcome you, and I'm going to ask my colleagues to join me in showing their welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Osika: — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members opposite for allowing me the opportunity on behalf of the official opposition here to welcome our young friends and

the students to this, the Assembly. We welcome you once again, and I hope you enjoy the proceedings and your visit to the beautiful Legislative Building here in Regina, Saskatchewan. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 5 — Post-Secondary Education and Training Funding (continued)

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join with my colleagues in welcoming the guests to the gallery. It's a pleasure always to see young people joining us here and watching our Chamber in process.

I'm particularly pleased today, I guess, also to have them join us because we're talking about a very important issue. We're talking about the future of our education system in this country, and we're talking about the future particularly, of the move from schooling into the job force. This is really what the issue is that we're debating today.

I mean what we're looking at is the issue of how Ottawa and our federal government are offloading their responsibilities in the area of post-secondary education, training, and employment. I think that what we need to talk about for a little bit is what exactly the kind of society is that we're going to be building here.

Now we have a federal government that is pulling out of many of the key areas of our economy. We have a federal government that is offloading its responsibilities onto the provinces, not simply the funding responsibility, but its entire system is being offloaded onto the provinces. We are slowly losing our ability to set national standards as a result of what the federal Liberals are up to. And I would say with the tacit consent — or perhaps not even the tacit consent, maybe the very explicit consent — of the opposition Liberals in this Chamber.

I think what we need to do is take a look at how this is impacting on us. Now we've seen the federal Liberals offload more than $30 million in cuts to our training programs in this province alone. Apart from the obvious impact it'll have, as I mentioned, on adult basic education, on skills training, on income support programs and services, it has an additional impact in that it takes away the ability for Ottawa to set standards. It takes away the ability for us to draw together a national skills training network.

It takes away from our ability to ensure that Saskatchewan people, students in particular, have the ability to be trained here and be able to go to jobs wherever they may want in the country, or conversely, to be trained elsewhere and come to jobs here in Saskatchewan. We are quickly losing these opportunities, and this is a major problem here.

I guess the technical word for it is portability. We talk about the loss of portability of education. Now what we're starting to see here is a user-pay system develop because of the cuts that Ottawa is making to the social and health transfers. This system will take away the money that used to buy seats for students, and in exchange will expect the students to pay the full cost of their education — completely at odds with our history in our country. We have always supported those most in need.

And what we're moving away from is the vision of Trudeau's just society that the Liberals once subscribed to, to a much colder, harsher, meaner, more market-driven Canada.

Now the problem with this . . . that may not be a big problem for some business people; it may not be a big problem for some of the members opposite. It is a big problem, however, if you are a single parent; if you are a young student; if you are somebody wanting to better themselves, because they don't have the money.

Now we listened to the radio this morning — and I was quite interested to hear of a meeting that had occurred, I guess in the riding of the member for Regina Victoria, of a group of low income tenants last night. And they were talking about the hardships that they were facing, and how difficult they found it even to pay for rent as they were busy going to school and attempting to better themselves so they could get jobs, get off of welfare, and support their families — laudable goals.

This is a problem they have today, with tuition heavily subsidized. Imagine what the impact will be tomorrow when we have to take a look and say to these single parents, say to these mothers with their children, I'm sorry; your $2,000 tuition just became a $10,000 tuition. And it became that because it will be better for you, according to the Chrétien government. Because you should be paying the full hit. You are the reason that we have a debt, according to Chrétien.

This is the kind of heartless, thoughtless approach to education that the members opposite are supporting. And it's one of the reasons I find it so difficult to support the amendment from the member opposite. This is just a dreadful approach to post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, the examples are numerous. And I want to move on and talk a little bit about unemployment insurance. As you know, in this country we have built up, largely at the prodding from CCF-NDP (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) members in the federal House of Commons, a system of employment insurance, or unemployment insurance; that it protected people who have temporarily lost work. It is a bridging payment. It's not an income support payment; it's a bridging payment to allow them to have some wage stability till they can get back on their feet.

Apart from cutting the training program, apart from cutting the health budget, apart from cutting the social services budget, the federal government doesn't seem happy simply to stop there. They have to cut these very basic income replacement programs, these stabilization programs.

Unemployment insurance is under serious attack in our country, and we are speaking out against it, not the Liberals opposite —

certainly not the Liberals in Ottawa, although perhaps Mr. Nunziata will now decide to join us and other members of the independent Liberal caucus — the ILC — folks of their ilk. It actually seems to be a quickly growing political movement in this country as the deposed member for . . . deposed Liberal leader in this House, the member for Greystone, has started the ball rolling by joining the independent Liberal caucus. Now she has two cohorts in parliament.

(1545)

Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact that we have with the unemployment insurance changes are very troublesome. What we have seen now is the cuts planned by the federal government are in fact the eighth major cut since 1971 for this program. It's the fourth in the 1990s and it's the second since the federal government was elected in 1993.

These cuts are serious. They are going to have a very adverse impact on low income people in our country. And they are done for no particular reason.

I think it's important to remember that if no changes were made to the UI program, absolutely no changes, the program would run a surplus of 5.5 billion this fiscal year alone — 5.5 billion. So why are we making the changes?

Well I would have to go back, I guess, to the letter from Mr. Goodale that says, well we're making the changes because Tokyo wants the changes. We're making the changes because Saskatchewan . . . because of the federal debt. We're making the changes because of ongoing debts — debts, of course, that the federal Liberals built up. And of course we're making the cuts because it is really the fault, as we hear from the federal Liberals, of the poor, of those who are trying to better themselves.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the federal budget and the cuts to the health and social transfers, as I mentioned earlier, we have three other Bills that are of big concern. C-96, C-111, and C-112 are Bills which will devastate the social programs that we have come to rely on as Canadians and have come to define ourselves by.

I'm reading here from a paper prepared by the Canadian Labour Congress as they appear before the human resource development committee, and they say that the changes, and I'll quote briefly from the paper, they say the changes:

> . . . involve a totally unjustified reduction to the income protection of unemployed workers; they move the program away from its fundamental purpose of stabilizing the incomes of workers by replacing earnings during periods of unemployment; and, they increase the authority of the federal government to make changes to the program on a day-to-day basis without reference to Parliament . . .

These are not the kind of changes that are progressive. These are not the kind of changes that befit a federal government that claims, as the member for Humboldt says, that they claim to represent the poor and represent the underrepresented in our society. What in fact this is, is a set of changes which show the real, true colours of the Grits.

It shows, in fact, a mean-spiritedness. It shows a meanness in the society in that they are attempting to hurt the most poor. Now the members opposite will say, oh well, that's just the NDP standing up for their constituents. Well that's right. We are. We're standing up for our constituents. We're standing up for Saskatchewan while they remain silent.

I think it's important though that we take a look, as the members opposite seem to want to ignore urban Saskatchewan. As at one point, the absolute arrogance of the comment from the member for Arm River in saying that rural people's votes should count for twice as much as urban members.

Let me use this example and talk in your terms about rural Saskatchewan. Because I too care about rural Saskatchewan, and I care about what's happening in the rural areas. And this is where these changes are going to be most devastating. Because what we're looking at is changes that drastically affect the seasonal workforce. That seasonal workforce is not simply here in Regina. It's in the north-east in the forest belt. It's in the north-west in the oil sector. It's scattered throughout the province, and it's in rural areas.

Now they say that in fact this is not going to have a big impact. They argue no, no, no, UI (unemployment insurance) changes are not going to have a big impact. It's going to save the country money. It's going to save the country money by taking money out of the pockets of our most poor. That is what's so shameful about this. That is the problem, and it affects the rural labour markets in particular. It affects also a lot of the low income, part-time labour force who are going to have to work longer in order to qualify for the benefits.

These are changes that the members opposite are defending? They're defending changes that will cut the amount of money people can receive on UI. They're defending the sort of changes that will allow us to cut out large segments of the labour force simply because they can only find work seasonally.

They're prepared to support cuts which will hurt women attempting to return to the labour force, who often enter into the lowest paying jobs, the seasonal jobs, who are not in the elite of our society. This is also going to affect obviously immigrant people. It will affect aboriginal people, and it will affect youth. So while the members opposite like to talk about how they are in fact supporting youth and how the federal government is such a great benefactor, the facts don't support it.

The UI cuts are very detrimental to young people. Young people often work in order to support their education, but work as we know . . . unemployment runs very high among young people. They are the ones who tend to take seasonal jobs in the forests. They are the ones who tend to take seasonal jobs on the rigs. These are the sort of people we need to be protecting because these are the sort of people who are using their money to go back to school, who are using their money to support young families, and they are using their money to support themselves in a very meagre way. But yet the members

opposite and the federal government continue their attack on these people.

Well the member for Canora said that we should be apologizing for what is happening to social programs in this province. I cannot disagree more. We have every reason to stand here today and be proud of what Saskatchewan has done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — While Ottawa has backed out of its responsibilities, while it has backed out of its commitment to fund education, to fund health care, to fund social services, while it has continued its attack on the old, on the poor, on the young, on students, on aboriginal people, on immigrants, on women, while it has done all of that through its Bills and through its budget, we have stood firm in support of them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to close my comments today by simply saying that I cannot agree with the amendment put forward by the members opposite for all of those reasons. It is just clearly, clearly an argument without basis in fact. It is an argument that ignores the real social problems in our society, and it is an argument that is ignorant to what the federal government is doing to our province.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members — all members of this Assembly including the Liberal members opposite — to join with us in standing up for Saskatchewan. Vote down the amendment. Support the original motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to join in this debate and speak against the amendment and speak in favour of the main motion as put forward by the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

I just want to read into the record again the motion as it is presented:

> That this Assembly commend the Saskatchewan government's funding priority in the March 28 budget for post-secondary education and training; and that this Assembly condemns the federal Liberal government's attack on students through their Canada Health and Social Transfer, CHST, and the UIC cuts.

When I look, Mr. Speaker, at the cuts in the Canada Health and Social Transfer and the unemployment insurance reductions — the reductions by the federal Liberals — I certainly know where their priorities lie, Mr. Speaker.

As you will likely be aware, the Canada Assistance Plan has been terminated and was replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer. Along with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, I have some real and genuine concerns about the disappearance of the Canada Assistance Plan and how the Canada Health and Social Transfer was put in its place.

Mr. Speaker, the provinces were obligated in the past to provide assistance to anyone in need. And this point is very important, the point that I'm about to make, is they were also obliged to use a common method for determining financial needs. In return, the federal government agreed to contribute federal dollars to help provinces maintain things like post-secondary education and training programs.

In 1994-1995, the federal contribution under the Canada assistance program totalled nearly $8 billion annually. Our share of this money was used to help support a broad network of social assistance and educational programs across this province, Mr. Speaker.

As a province and as a nation, we have been largely successful in protecting the most vulnerable. We've been successful, I think, in supporting those who are unable to support themselves. And I think we've been successful, Mr. Speaker, in providing top-notch educational and training programs, and especially, I think, Mr. Speaker, here in our fine province.

But conditions have changed and we are now faced with growing public pressure to move beyond our past successes and to redesign social services and educational programs.

The challenges that we will be meeting and the expectations will certainly be to ensure the safety net as was promoted under the Canada assistance program. And we want to ensure that those standards are not lost.

This may be a challenge and I think it's a large challenge, and the Canada Health and Social Transfer legislation with respect to education makes life, I think, for many provincial governments, extremely difficult. We all have different social, intellectual, physical, and financial abilities. These differences are differences that I think we often celebrate because they make us so diverse and a vibrant society. But it is often these differences which are the defining factors in an individual's employment and financial status.

Those of us who have healthy families, are well educated, have good jobs, and are financially stable are very fortunate. But with a few small changes in our lives, we could be less fortunate. With any adverse change to the status of the finances here in Saskatchewan, the ability to back-fill the federal Liberal's educational cuts could be very difficult, if not impossible, Mr. Speaker. And when we have to make reductions in education I think that that truly makes all of us less fortunate.

I am concerned as well, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that we are facing, as a nation, if the federal Liberal government begins to walk away . . . or I should say, I'm concerned about what we are facing as a nation if the federal Liberal government begins to walk away from its responsibilities.

In Saskatchewan, despite difficult times, we have remained committed to a high standard of education for everyone. We have been doing our best to deal with these cuts and we are now looking at ways to link youth with jobs and education so that if they end up receiving assistance they are not caught in a

dependency cycle.

Our youth futures initiative would require that youth re-enter school or accept a community-based training or work experience to be eligible for that program. I think this is an innovative way to deal with these cuts. What I'm telling you today, Mr. Speaker, and to other members in the Assembly, is that the federal government's present direction in the area of health, social programing and education is one that should be of concern to all of us.

The erosion of a national safety net and cuts in funding to the provincial and territorial governments for education could have long-term, negative consequences for this country. But, Mr. Speaker, we have done what . . . what we have done in the face of difficulty is very different.

(1600)

And I want to refer to the March 28, 1996 *Globe and Mail* quote that was used in this Assembly several times before. And the caption in the top of the headline is: "Again, common sense in Saskatchewan". And I'll just pick one quote out of there. It says that:

> The New Democrats have governed imaginatively since they took office in 1991. Facing a deficit of $845 million, the worst per capita in Canada, they feared the collapse of the social system they had built. They didn't create the mess — the NDP had left the Conservatives a balanced budget when they were defeated in 1982 — but they knew it would take drastic measures to clean it up. To save social programs, they would have to recast them.

And recast them, Mr. Speaker, we did. I find it incredible that the member from Canora-Pelly stands up in this legislature and twists the facts and defends the federal Liberal government for what they have done. To me, it seems that this provincial government has made some very responsible, and in fact very, very difficult decisions in back-filling 100 per cent of the educational cuts.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to strongly support the main motion, as I said, put forward by the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy and as seconded by the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, and speak against the amendment. And I would ensure all members to vote as I do. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I echo the sentiments of my colleague that has just spoken before me on being pleased to enter the debate and support the main motion before us. And I'd also urge all members on all sides of the House to defeat the amendment.

I'm finding it passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite have been doing nothing lately but apologize for the federal cuts that we've seen from their Liberal counterparts in Ottawa; and, Mr. Speaker, in standing up repeatedly to say, oh, it's only this amount; or, what are you whining about, it's only that; not recognizing some of the serious impacts that this will have in the areas of health, education, and social programing for all provinces.

Because with the withdrawal of funding priority and commitment to the level that the federal government has put forward recently in their budget, there's also the withdrawal of recognition that we have to have some strong standards in place across the piece so that all areas of our country, and not only our country but our province, can have a standard, and a quality standard, of education, of health care, and of social programing.

Instead of recognizing clearly what's going on, they're now turning their backs on what really has been happening in Saskatchewan. And I'd say also turning their backs on the realistic nature of people across this country in understanding what's going on when this statement is made by Ottawa in their federal budget.

Surely the Liberals across from us must know that it was their campaign during the last election that's had them walking door to door vigorously opposing any increases in spending. They were calling for expenditure cuts. They agreed that we should pay down on the debt to lessen the burden for future generations. They talked about decreasing the level of taxation and promised more or improved services for Saskatchewan people.

Realistic? People in Saskatchewan couldn't quite believe their ears because people in Saskatchewan began to ask the question: then where will the money come from; then where are we going to get the dollars that are needed in these priority areas?

And they know obviously, from looking at what their federal counterparts are doing, they know now that it's not going to be the priority of the Liberal members opposite either.

People in Saskatchewan obviously, by their vote, told the Liberals opposite that they were embarking on mission impossible. Mission impossible, they say. When will we finally be paying for this, the promises of the Liberals, in the budget that would be in the same manner as the Conservatives? Talking about it one time in their election promises, the things we can do for you, and we're going to find those efficiencies through meaner, leaner government, through somehow waste and mismanagement that we haven't found since 1991 when we had to adjust already to a $1.2 billion cut to just come into a situation where we would be balancing the operating budgets of this province from year to year.

So while they say, well it's only a little hurt, Mr. Speaker, it's a little hurt on top of all of the kinds of things that we've had to do to make up for the Tories' spending sprees over the years. And people in Saskatchewan now didn't want to see the same kind of budgeting practices happening from the Liberal members opposite.

For Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, I say, are astute, and they see the continuation of a Tory agenda federally with the budget that's been presented. And they see that the Tory agenda

continues with a Liberal hat on a Tory head. The Saskatchewan litany applies here. A litany I heard when I went from door to door in Saskatchewan was: Liberal, Tory, same old story.

The members opposite, in blocking out reality, have selectively chosen to ignore the facts as well. We've stated them over and over, but I think you have to restate them because they've chosen to block them out. And maybe at one point when one of us states them clearly enough, there might be an aha! experience in the Liberal ranks across.

And they'll join us in understanding that, as a result of federal withdrawal from training, partly through changes to unemployment insurance, SIAST will experience a total decrease in revenue of about 14 per cent. We had a presentation to our Regina caucus from the SIAST campus here, and this was before they had learned that the provincial government was going to attempt to back-fill the lost dollars from the federal government. And they told us about the magnitude of the impact that has on their institution and their worry about losing the competency-based education that is now helping individuals who are very skilled in a vocational, technical kind of way . . . from entering into the courses they need to be productive members in a workplace and contribute to the jobs and the economy of Saskatchewan.

We heard presentations from regional colleges who are now putting forward reform or restructuring packages. And it wasn't at the insistence of the provincial government or anything we had done, but they looked at the loss of monies that they would be gleaning from this lack of funding to adult-based education from the federal government, that they would be withdrawing the training dollars and opportunities to purchase those training spaces for people who were looking at, in their adult years, being retrained to re-enter the workforce and again contribute to the way that we're trying to approach the 21st century and full employment for people in our province.

What we try to do? We try to maintain the provincial funding to all our training programs this year in addition to maintaining operating grants to these institutions. It's not what the provincial government will be doing, but they're feeling the effects of the federal government, and they know we can't possibly, at the provincial level, back-fill for all those lost dollars.

They've also told me that you only need to look around at what's happening in other provinces to feel grateful to the province of Saskatchewan for the commitment we have — following the consultation process — to their priorities and their values and their principles.

They wanted us to look around . . . and say, for example, New Brunswick who's in the process of making everyone involved in education system in that province a provincial government employee: every teacher, every director of education, every administrator, and every janitor. Everybody in New Brunswick. They're abolishing all elected school boards in the province. Now when you look at the post-secondary education and the school boards in our province . . . and we say that at the local level they're better able to priorize through the regional college system, through our SIAST and so on, where we need to spend the dollars to reflect the job market and the economy and the local economy. We see what New Brunswick is doing.

People tell me you need only look to Alberta at the magnitude of the budget cuts there and the government-imposed solutions that are realities for public education.

It doesn't take long to find out that if you're going to have an impact on early childhood education and children in their formative years, it's going to have an impact on what you can provide for post-secondary education. If we prepare our children early, we prepare them well to face the educational challenges and the training they'll need for future employment. You need to start early, and you need only look at Alberta and find out what they see as starting early — cut back education at the kindergarten level; cut back funding to children in early childhood development stages and the early learning stages which will have an impact not only on our education system but our other systems as we try and restore the skills of those individuals who will now be falling through the cracks because they're not prepared early on in their lives.

Or you can look towards Manitoba where radical changes to the way the teachers are treated have been proposed with little input from teachers or communities — an imposition from the top . . . and in Manitoba, where the provincial grants to school boards are being reduced year after year after year.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, we all shudder when we look to Ontario. There sometimes seems to be an all-out assault on the public education system when you see slash funding that seems to be the number one answer to everything in Ontario these days.

Mr. Speaker, then I find it passing strange that the members opposite are not getting on their feet and talking about the Saskatchewan solution, the Saskatchewan response to the values and principles of working together to safeguard health, education, and social programing for future generations in this province.

They're still willing to sit there and block out the realty — the realty of reducing federal deficits by slashing Canada's social programs with spending cuts to our key areas that we've identified. We believe the Liberals in Ottawa are making the wrong choices, and we believe those Liberals who are supporting Saskatchewan residents should be standing with us to tell Ottawa they're making the wrong budget choices.

We don't believe in attacking those most vulnerable in our communities. We do believe in sitting down with our people and talking about how we can reform the systems to reflect the 21st century, to prepare our province to enter the next century, and not stand by and say we can do nothing.

We can be very creative. We can be very strong if we work together. And that requires a recognition on all sides of the House to come together and tell people where redesign and restructuring is necessary so that we can reflect the priorities of people in this province and not pander to the misguided

priorities of the people in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, in the area of education, I can't help but also mention that to have a strong post-secondary sector, you need people who are prepared, as I mentioned, early on in their education, but also through their K to 12 years.

And I find again it very strange that the member opposite who comes from the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) organization in his past life, that comes from the education sector in his past life, would not stand up and want to recognize that apart from what the other provinces are doing to recoil and recover from the federal withdrawal of monies, that in our province we're committed to supporting education, be it rural, urban, or northern Saskatchewan.

We want to ensure that all Saskatchewan students have access to a comprehensive range of high quality programs regardless of where they live and at what level in their education — be it early childhood, be it K to 12, or be it post-secondary. That, Mr. Speaker, is the key to preparing our province for the next century and preparing our province to be a strong contender in the global economy.

What does this mean for our province in the area of funding and the foundation operating grant this year for the K to 12 system which the member has blocked out and chosen not to recognize? It's providing higher cost to education in rural settings because we recognize greater distances, and small isolated schools in Saskatchewan are a reality. On average, we recognize that expenditures per pupil in rural divisions are 25 per cent higher than those from public and separate divisions in the cities. Rural school divisions are eligible for separate funding with a sparsity factor: small schools, rural transportation, and new rural technology factors.

I don't hear the members talking about that. I don't hear the members understanding the demographics change in Saskatchewan. But funding with the foundation grant formula can make up for those changes. They talk about — what? — poor us, no one's listening to rural Saskatchewan. And they don't stand up and at least acknowledge what has been done to the tune of . . . in 1986 expenditures for the rural areas, for rural transportation, for the technology changes that will provide distance education and other access to training in rural Saskatchewan, that these categories all total $70 million this year.

(1615)

While they ask us to stop whining about withdrawal of monies from the federal government, we ask them to stand up and recognize what's being done instead of saying, we're not getting this, or we're not getting that. They're not acknowledging that there's a commitment to quality education in all areas of this province, at all levels of education in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, we're also a government that recognizes the strong need to have local governments and governance at a local level that have a commitment from us to educate but also that 80 per cent of the grants that we offer to them — 80 per cent Mr. Speaker — of those grants are monies that are unconditional to those local areas so that they can provide local priorities.

It's not a move on behalf of this government to strike out the local boards and say we're going to be political; we'll do away with you out there because we, the government from Regina, know what's best for you — as we've seen in New Brunswick and as we've seen in Alberta. That's the Liberal approach.

Mr. Speaker, we're not the Liberal approach. We don't say, if only the way it was in Saskatchewan was the way it was when we had to take 15 years to de-Thatcherize this province, Mr. Speaker. We don't want to go back to the past, Mr. Speaker. Although some don't recognize they have roots in that Liberal Party and they don't recognize they have roots in the federal Liberal Party and they don't want to speak on behalf of Saskatchewan Liberal people, Mr. Speaker, so I wonder where their roots really are, and where their priorities are going to be set, and who they're going to listen to, to set those priorities.

We ask them to join us, at least to join us in recognizing that there's a lot of work that needs to be done, that we're going to do it together with all people in Saskatchewan. And whether they like or not, we're going to prepare this province to meet the challenges of the 21st century. That's how we work. We work together to organize ourselves to face any challenges that represented to us.

If they still are kind of shaking their head and not really understanding what that means in education, I can give them an outline of that, or what it means in health. It might mean, for example, $3 million for rural technology factors this year to prepare people in our rural areas for the technological changes. Additional million dollars for design of disabled students' programs. Another million dollars targeted to behavioural programs. Northern allowances, there's 2.35 million for community schools, and the list goes on.

What we're trying to do is sustain quality education in rural Saskatchewan, improve services for students at risk, improve opportunities for youth, maintain our opportunities for training, maintain our opportunities for people to retrain to re-enter the job market — all this in contrast to what I've heard said today about denial and not really willing to stand up and work together with us to adjust to these changing realities.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I suggest the members opposite face reality. Look at what is being done. At least be able to understand where the monies are priorized after withdrawal of the magnitude that we've seen from the federal government. And after serious second thought, join us. Join with us to congratulate all those, not just the representatives here on government side, who are trying to present this motion today and the kind of negativism that it's incurred upon the motion from the amendment opposite, but to join with us and congratulate all those who worked so hard to maintain quality

of education in Saskatchewan.

Set aside the cheap politic for the moment. Set aside the political antics. Recognize the hard work that still needs to be done. Roll up your sleeves, and support the motion before you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to comment as I enter this debate on the very good quality of the speakers — particularly on the government side — in this debate earlier today. It's my great pleasure to address this motion:

> That this Assembly commend the Saskatchewan government's funding priority in the March 28 budget for post-secondary education and training; and that this Assembly condemns the federal Liberal government's attack on students through their Canada Health and Social Transfer and UIC cuts.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with the first part of the motion, and that is the part that directly falls upon us as the provincial government. And I think I can sort of capture what it is I want to say right off the start by casting myself back 24 hours in this Legislative Assembly.

The Minister of Finance's desk is two over from mine, and I found myself over bending the Minister of Finance's ear yesterday over a particular issue. And after about 15 minutes I just stopped. And I said, you know, isn't this amazing, the system we've got in Saskatchewan? Here I've spent 15 minutes nattering at you about a government policy issue. Would that happen, Mr. Speaker, in Ontario? Do you think there's a single back-bench MLA has the opportunity to sit beside the Minister of Finance and discuss important issues of the day, issues like post-secondary education, issues like the running of Crown corporations, any other issue?

I don't think that in Ontario back-bench MLAs even can talk about the GST and the potential harmonization with their Minister of Finance. And we certainly know that in the federal government you can talk about the GST as long as it's, aye, aye, whatever you say, Prime Minister, whatever you say, Minister of Finance — unlike our great tradition here.

And I don't mean to leave the impression that we can all go off as a bunch of loose cannons. But what I am trying to leave the impression of is here we have a process that's in place that allows all members a full, complete access to the Premier, to the cabinet ministers, to each other, open caucus meetings every day — those sorts of things — and that's the process, Mr. Speaker, that led us to our March 28 budget.

That's the process of involvement of the entire caucus that led to the choices we took. Now, certainly open for debate were all of the choices, the proper choices. Of course there's always going to be debate and give and take about it. The fact is every single government MLA was in putting our pitch for what we thought should be happening in the budget.

Now that comes smack up against the reality of $114 million offload from the federal Liberal government. That created huge problems, but problems that collectively we dealt with, I think, in an exemplary fashion.

This motion talks about post-secondary education, and as we have repeatedly said in this Chamber and everywhere else, this provincial government back-filled $11 million of the $15 million cut that the federal Liberals introduced into post-secondary education.

And were that the long and short of the story, it would be great. No big problem. Certainly you can pony up probably $11 million without huge difficulties, if you're dealing with the entire budget at the same time. But to compound the problem was the offload in health — $52 million there, another $48 million in social programing. The total, $114 million offload, and that's this year alone. Never mind the effect next year when the offload is even greater.

So we couldn't simply say, well let's go back to the taxpayers and increase taxes. I mean, tell me, anybody tell me what tax could reasonably be increased?

The members opposite talk about the offload not being $114 million, Mr. Speaker. In fact I heard the number earlier today of it being $61 million. This may be true if you take into account some tax credits that the federal government shifted onto — I see I'm onto it — that the federal government shifted onto the provincial government some time ago.

Well please to tell me . . . please to explain how it is, where it is we should be increasing taxation. Where is it that we should be increasing taxation to come up with that additional 50-some million dollars? Is it that the official opposition, the provincial Liberal Party think that we should be harmonizing the provincial sales tax with the GST, the nationally hated goods and services tax, a tax so hated that one long-time Liberal MP (Member of Parliament) voted against his government's budget. And his reward for having served them loyally for '84 until now, his reward for serving the Liberal Party of Canada loyally, is to get the boot. He is out. He's now sitting as an independent member. The Prime Minister has made it quite clear that for daring, daring to speak out against the Liberal GST problems, only reward is get kicked out.

And this is all part of the broad problem, Mr. Speaker. Without a fair taxation policy nationally, a taxation policy that says you pay according to your ability to pay, that corporations should pay according to their ability to pay, that corporations should be paying a fair tax — without that fair taxation system, you get this push and shove.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it real interesting. Saskatchewan gets offloaded $114 million in those three areas — health, education, post-secondary education, and social services, this year alone — $114 million offload. But this year alone, and I invite the official opposition to square this circle. We get offloaded $114 million; Imperial Oil of Canada just received

$843 million in a tax refund settlement from the federal Liberal government — $843 million in a tax refund to Imperial Oil.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker. And let's see now, how bad is Imperial Oil hurting? Well, Mr. Speaker, in 19 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes, get out the kleenex. In 1994 over 1993, Imperial Oil's profits only rose 29 per cent. In 1995 over 1994, Imperial's profits only rose an additional 43 per cent to $514 million. In 1996 over 1995, Imperial Oil's profits rose over 300 per cent — over 300 per cent. Imperial Oil clearly needed an $843 million tax break, courtesy of the federal Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, who pays for these tax breaks? All Saskatchewan people. Oh, I don't blame them for being upset. I would be upset if I had to defend that national government too. I would be real annoyed at this inane policy — 843 million for Imperial Oil.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — We've got unemployment in Canada, Mr. Speaker, double-digit unemployment. I remember the good old days — the good old days, 1974, when the national unemployment, the numbers, in real numbers, we hit a crisis, Mr. Speaker. There was in 1974, 1 million Canadians unemployed. Who was in power? The Liberals. Liberals in power. One million people unemployed in Canada in 1974 and we had a crisis.

Well what's the situation today? More than 2 million Canadians unemployed. And who's in power? Liberals. Liberals. What's their answer to unemployment? Let's give Imperial Oil $843 million in a tax rebate.

(1630)

Shame on you, shame on you for supporting that policy. This is unspeakable, how the federal Liberal government can treat its supporters who support the Liberal Party very, very well at election time with big dollar donations, with big help in election campaigns.

Isn't this awful that a government will respond to whoever's paying the piper. They're captives — the federal Liberal Party is captives to the corporate sector. And the provincial Liberal Party is tied right in. Tied right in. It's the same party, the same party.

Now contrast that, contrast that, Mr. Speaker, to our budget in Saskatchewan. I know Liberals want us to talk about the choices that we made. And certainly we have made choices. There were some choices that one would argue we could have made. You might say, why not cut the number of MLAs by 12 per cent?

Well, Mr. Speaker, and they don't even recognize . . . Mr. Speaker, the absurdity of this is the official opposition don't even recognize it happened. Prior to the last election, as members will know, should know, there were 66 members in the Legislative Assembly. Today there's 58. Today there's 58 members. That's a choice that was made, recognizing that telecommunication services are improved, highways are much improved.

Mr. Speaker, the ability for MLAs to get around and communicate is so much . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I recognize that we have the good fortune that this is not a timed debate and there's opportunity for all members to get involved. However, we don't all have to be involved at the same time.

And I recognize that the hon. member from Regina Coronation Park has the floor and I'll ask your cooperation to allow him to proceed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, we've reduced the number of MLAs from 66 to 58. That's a 12 per cent reduction. Or put another way, it's 8 fewer members sitting in the Legislative Assembly.

An Hon. Member: — Or put another way, it's leadership.

Mr. Trew: — Put it another way, it's leadership. It's recognizing that if as a government we're saying there's only this many dollars to go around, we're clearly not willing to increase taxes. We've done that. No question about that. After the '91 election, we had to — we had to bring the fiscal situation into balance.

Once we attained balance, the earliest opportunity you have to do this sort of a thing, to reduce the number of MLAs by any number or to increase the numbers, is at the next general election. At the very first opportunity, this government showed leadership. This government reduced the number of MLAs by eight.

Then we also cut the Premier's and cabinet ministers' salaries by 5 per cent and then froze their pay at that reduced level. Then the complaints didn't entirely go away. There was some need for further transparency into the way that MLAs are paid. So we set up a commission with instructions that our pay should not go up — written instructions tabled in this Legislative Assembly that our pay shouldn't go up.

Well I don't know about anybody else, but if those are the instructions, clearly there's only . . . the best I could hope for personally from my pocketbook would be break even. The worst is a decrease, from my personal perspective and from the credit union's perspective as they look at my account balance daily or monthly or however often they want to do it.

Well what we wind up with is pay cut, de facto 2 per cent pay cut. More leadership and more transparent pay system, 2 per cent cut in all of our pay. And I recognize this affects opposition as well as government MLAs, but that's the system we operate under.

What are some of the other things we did? We took a 25 per cent cut in our communication allowance. Now as members

will know, the communication allowance isn't something that goes into our pockets in any sense. It's a matter of, if we need to buy a stamp and an envelope and some paper to communicate with constituents or others, we can do so and that is funded. So that didn't affect my personal pocketbook, but it certainly affects my ability to communicate with people throughout Saskatchewan and elsewhere. And I think a 25 per cent cut in anything is significant.

In fact the jury is out whether we should have or should not have done that, but that's a moot point.

Some of the other things we could have done with our budget — recognizing $114 million new problem presented to us from the federal Liberal government — some of the other things we could have done would be to perhaps cut health services, perhaps cut health services.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, we went around during the election and then had it reinforced with us after the election. We did that to consult with the people of Saskatchewan. In that consultation process the people of Saskatchewan said health is the biggest issue in our lives. We've got to maintain a health care system, and so we did it.

Mr. Speaker, we could have made other choices. We could have cut social services benefits; again we did not. The measure of a society, I think, can be best summed up with . . . a society's value can be measured, or the greatness of the society can be measured by how it treats the weakest and poorest of its citizenry. I think this government passed the test of time there.

Yes, we'd like to do more. Absolutely. But I point out to the Liberal opposition, and anyone else, the budget choices we made were tough. I mean, ask any one of the 550 provincial civil servants who either took an early retirement or lost their job. They're actively out looking for other work. Ask them if they could have paid a higher price. Clearly the answer is no. Clearly not. But faced with, protect health care, education, social programing, choices have to be made — difficult choices. I am very proud of the manner in which those 550 provincial civil servants were dealt with. It's not perfect, but I'm very proud of the manner in which we addressed that.

Mr. Speaker, we made choices. I'm not going to try and rehash our budget. We made choices. The Liberals made choices. Their choices are very clear. They're saying, let's support the federal government. They're saying, let's support the federal government in its move to harmonize the PST (provincial sales tax) and the GST. They say, oh it will be so much simpler for business.

Well you know what? It would be simpler for business. They're absolutely right about that. It would be simpler for business.

But what they fail to mention is that currently the situation in Saskatchewan with our 9 per cent PST is that 400 . . . nearly $400 million a year comes into the GST . . . or provincial sales tax revenue; $400 million a year comes into the general revenue of the province of Saskatchewan that under a GST, businesses pass on to the end consumer.

Four hundred million dollars a year we capture from corporations when they purchase vehicles, when they purchase office furniture, paper supplies, that sort of thing. We capture, with our provincial sales tax, $400 million a year. Under the GST, that gets passed on to the end consumer.

Now what that means in its simplicity, because there's 1 million people in Saskatchewan, a $400 million profit translates simply into $400 for every man, woman, and child. Liberals say, pass $400 per person taxes on to individuals. New Democrats say no, that's not acceptable — $400 additional taxes per person not on.

That's why we fight, we fight the harmonization of the PST. And we will, I predict, if — if harmonization carries on, Saskatchewan will proudly be the last province, the last province in Canada to join that. The only thing that would even cause us to blink is if it resulted in corporations potentially moving out of Saskatchewan and massive job loss. Clearly, in the face of reality, you might have to make some adjustments.

Please don't misread that I'm signalling we're giving up the fight. We'll be dead last.

Liberals say, $400 additional tax per man, woman, and child is fine. We say it's not. That's the line in the sand. We are opposed to this harmonization.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about fair taxation. I've talked about a number of things. I am proud to support this motion in which we are proudly saying we made the right choices, by and large, in our budget.

The federal Liberal government, with things like it did with Imperial Oil, an $843 million tax refund settlement to Imperial Oil, they get . . . Imperial gets 843 million; we get a bill for 114 million. Those things are just so patently unfair, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals are a party of the corporate elite. New Democrats are a party of the people. We're trying to provide the best government we possibly can. I am going to proudly stand up in favour of this motion, and I will be opposing the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:44 p.m. until 4:45 p.m.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 9

Osika	McLane	Draude
McPherson	Belanger	Bjornerud
Julé	Krawetz	Gantefoer

Nays — 21

Wiens	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Pringle
Koenker	Trew	Bradley

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm going to ask all members to come to order to allow the vote to proceed and to be conducted in an orderly fashion.

Lorje	Stanger	Hamilton
Murray	Langford	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Sonntag
Jess	Murrell	Thomson

The division bells rang from 4:47 p.m. until 4:48 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 22

Wiens	MacKinnon	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Pringle	Koenker	Trew
Bradley	Lorje	Stanger
Hamilton	Murray	Langford
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	Jess	Murrell
Thomson		

Nays — 9

Osika	McLane	Draude
McPherson	Belanger	Bjornerud
Julé	Krawetz	Gantefoer

The Assembly adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

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