

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of people throughout Saskatchewan who have been impacted by big game damage in the province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to change the Saskatchewan big game damage compensation program so that it provides more care and reasonable compensation to farmers and townsfolk for commercial crops, hay, silage bales, shrubs and trees, which are being destroyed by the overpopulation of deer and other big game, including the elimination of the \$500 deductible; and to take control measures to prevent the overpopulation of deer and other big game from causing this destruction.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are mostly from the Wood River constituency — communities such as Mankota, Ponteix, Ferland, Kincaid, Hazenmore, Meyronne, and some from Bengough. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy 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 of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the municipal revenue-sharing reduction;

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime in Saskatchewan.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, the cabinet travel accountability Act.

Mr. Heppner: — I give notice that I shall on day no. 20 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the 1,000 wooden penises purchased by the Education department: (1) please provide a list of any provincial government departments and/or organizations outside Saskatchewan that have purchased wooden demonstrators from Saskatchewan Education department; which household-name firm purchased wooden

demonstrators from the Saskatchewan Education department; and provide a list of Saskatchewan schools and health districts that purchased 46 wooden demonstrators.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 20 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Sask Energy and Mines: in the 1995-96 annual report for Saskatchewan Energy and Mines, page 32, under petroleum and natural gas, the listed expenditures are \$11,378,907. Included in this amount is an expense of \$7.714 million in out-of-court settlements to resolve lawsuits against the Crown. What were the individual amounts of each of these settlements; who were the recipients of these settlements; what are the circumstances involved in each of the settlements; are there any lawsuits still pending against the Crown with regard to SaskEnergy and Mines; and (5) what are the amounts for the out-of-court settlements that have been settled since the end of 1995-96 fiscal year?

And I have similar questions for the 1992-93 year, 1993-94 year, and 1994-95 year. And I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members in the House, I'd like to introduce to you four very hard-working and dedicated members of the Naicam volunteer fire department that are in our Assembly today: Denis Sunderland, Carl Peterson, Rick Meyer, and Rodger Hayward.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to introduce two . . . to make two introductions. The first is on behalf of my colleague, the member for Regina Elphinstone, and this is a group of students seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are 14 grade 8 students from Herchmer School.

They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Aaron Anderson, and by a teacher associate, Mrs. Wanda Warner. They will spend some time in the Chamber, and I look forward to meeting with them later on, on behalf of the Deputy Premier. So I ask all members here to extend a warm welcome to them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Also seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, there are two people I'd like to introduce to you. One, Peter Chartrand, is a constituent of mine, and I would ask him to stand, and he's accompanied by Bill Oxtoby. Now members will recognize Peter because he is the executive chef and the manager of the cafeteria board. And Peter and his staff have been very innovative and creative in the changes they've made to the cafeteria.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — And I was particularly pleased when they added bagels to the menu. And also Bill Oxtoby, who is with Peter, is the accountant in charge of the money. So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I consider it a privilege this afternoon to introduce to you, four people seated in your gallery. John and Eleanor Shriener who farm just south of Martensville, and Rob and Sharon Shriener, who farm near the south-west corner of my constituency. We'd like to welcome them to the legislature and to Regina this afternoon. Please join me in giving them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm privileged this afternoon to introduce a group of individuals who have joined us. A couple of the individuals I'm going to introduce are actually international guests from the country of Japan. I'd like to introduce in the east gallery, a family from Whitewood who are acting as hosts, and their guests. And first of all I'll start with our hosts, Pat and Darlene Santo, their daughter Tracy and son Robin, special friend Julie Houtman, and then our two special guests all the way from Japan, Risa Owa and Asuka Tekawa.

We want to welcome you and extend a warm welcome and invite the members to welcome these special guests. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, one of the leaders in our constituency, Bev Kimble, the mayor of Lucky Lake. You may have heard me speaking yesterday in my address to the budget speech about the successes of Lucky Lake. Well the mayor is sitting in your gallery and I'll ask her to stand.

And Bev Kimble is also the mother of one of Saskatchewan's great hockey players, Darin Kimble, who has played for a number of teams in the NHL (National Hockey League) and is currently playing with Kansas in the International Hockey League.

Bev is a farmer, has been a long-time community activist, supporter and worker with the Red Cross, and has been recognized for her leadership in her present role as mayor and I welcome her to the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome a face that I'm sure is very familiar to most everyone here, the general secretary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Mr. Fred Herron, in your gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government members I too want to join the Acting Leader of the Liberal Party in welcoming general secretary Fred Herron to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of our caucus I too would like to welcome Mr. Herron to our legislature this afternoon, and hope he enjoys the proceedings.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Tisdale Trojans Champions

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my constituency is becoming noted for its hockey excellence, not necessarily this year, the Melfort Mustangs, but today that I want to introduce and recognize a very dynamic team from Tisdale.

The Tisdale Trojans AAA Midgets captured the provincial title on Monday night in Tisdale. They defeated Yorkton by a score of 7 to 3 in front of their home town crowd. The Trojans now advance to the western regionals in Manitoba on April 3.

Please join me in congratulating the accomplishments of the Trojans — the players, their families, fans, and in particular their coach, Carl VanCamp.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Opening of Bioriginal Processing Plant

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Monday I, along with the Minister of Crown Investments, had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of a new and innovative agricultural industry.

I am referring to the opening of the Bioriginal Food and Science Corporation in Asquith, Mr. Speaker. The objective of this new organization is to produce a novel value added product — gamma linolenic acid, or GLA, which is an oil utilized in many health foods and other pharma-medical products such as cosmetics and veterinary foods.

GLA, Mr. Speaker, is produced from one of the many speciality crops being grown in this province, borage.

Bioriginal Food and Science Corporation is demonstrating that Saskatchewan has the researchers, producers, processors, and distributors to successfully market a new product internationally. They have provided Saskatchewan producers with another market option, which can only be positive for our agricultural industry.

I want to congratulate the achievements of the Bioriginal Food and Science Corporation on the opening of its Asquith plant, and I know that all members of this Assembly will want to wish them great success.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wooden Demonstrators Exported

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let it never be said that the PC (Progressive Conservative) opposition does not do its part to promote Saskatchewan exports. In today's paper we learn that the Saskatchewan government has now unloaded its 1,000 wooden penises.

I note with interest the comments of deputy Education minister Craig Dotson who said:

We made no particular concerted effort to sell them. I had a number of telephone calls because of all the publicity.

Of course the worldwide attention to this great Saskatchewan penis surplus was initiated by the member from Rosthern. I think he should be congratulated for helping the government get rid of this prickly problem.

We do have one concern, however. We're not real happy that Saskatchewan is now going to be known as a major exporter of 5-inch wooden penises. It seems to be another case of the NDP (New Democratic Party) selling our province short.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Congratulations to Junior Citizen of the Year

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a young girl from my constituency, from the community of Prud'homme, Candace Triol. Candace was one of eight individuals to receive Junior Citizen of the Year awards at the annual convention of the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association last September.

The Saskatchewan Junior Citizen of the Year awards program recognizes outstanding youth between the ages of 8 to 18, and consideration is not limited to excellence in academics, athletics, or the arts. The adjudication criteria strongly emphasizes participation in home, church, school, community, the environment, and humanitarian activities. There is also consideration given to nominees who have persisted in times of adversity.

Candace is an individual that fits into that criteria. She is at the top of her class academically and excels in music. Candace is involved in her church, in raising money for Telemiracle, and in improving the environment. Although she has had a heart problem and tires very easily, she seems to have a lot of energy when it comes to helping other people.

So congratulations, Candace, on this achievement, Junior Citizen of the Year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Opening of Tri-Sum in Canwood

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people never cease to amaze me. Last year the government's economic strategy, *Partnership for Growth*, identified value added processing as a cornerstone for our provincial economy in the new century.

This past Friday, Mr. Speaker, I attended the grand opening of a new food processing business that will create jobs in rural Saskatchewan, in the village of Canwood.

Tri-Sum, located in Canwood, Mr. Speaker is operated by Jeannette and Don Dziurzynski. Their product is called Tru-fruit, a delicious yoghurt bar. Tru-fruit are made using an innovative freeze-dry technology that retains the natural nutritional value, colour, aroma, and flavour of raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries. And best of all, Mr. Speaker, these bars contain no artificial colouring, no artificial flavour, and no artificial preservatives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and the members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating Don and Jeannette and their staff of Tri-Sum quality products for their contribution to the renewal and growth of the provincial economy.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Business Openings

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, making members' statements in the legislature affords all members the opportunity to point out to colleagues extraordinary or special events that take place in their constituencies. We are able to use these opportunities to highlight something out of the ordinary. And I underline, highlight something out of the norm in our part of the province.

And the members opposite do that regularly, Mr. Speaker. Those members use these statements to point out good economic news stories from their constituencies on almost a daily basis.

While we're all glad to hear things are happening economically in all areas of the province, I find it interesting and telling that the members opposite regard such instances in their constituencies as unusual and that they warrant special statements in this House.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's good to hear of innovative entrepreneurs who prosper despite this government, but I'm looking forward to the day when we get to a point in this province when business openings and expansions are considered the norm and not some exception.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Jumps Into Spring Horse Show

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to recognize an event that has a long history in this province.

This week, Mr. Speaker, is the 73rd year of the Regina Jumps Into Spring Horse Show. This event, presented by the Saskatchewan hunter jumper association, allows people throughout the province to enjoy some of Saskatchewan's and our nation's most promising young riders, and of course their talented horses. These young riders will compete for \$10,000 in prize money.

Spectators will be doubly impressed this year, Mr. Speaker, as Canada's 1996 Olympic Summer Games entry, the horse Advantage Chrysler, will be part of the competition. As well, distinguished Spruce Meadows' equestrians Albert Kley and Dayton Gorsline will also take part in the celebration.

I say celebration, Mr. Speaker, because this event not only celebrates a 73-year-old tradition of show jumping in Regina, a tradition that is as exciting and alive today as it was during the 1920s, but this event also celebrates the rebirth of spring in our province and indeed the entire prairie region.

I look forward to being part of this event with its traditions and excitement and I ask all members to join me in wishing organizers and participants, both riders and horses, the best of luck during the rest of this week. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dual Marketing

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have often pointed out that the Alberta government is far more progressive than our Saskatchewan government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — In today's . . . in today's *Globe and Mail* we see that the Alberta official opposition is also far more progressive than Saskatchewan's official opposition. Alberta Liberal Party Agriculture critic Ken Nicol, said most producers prefer dual marketing, and even blamed the Klein government for not doing enough to promote dual marketing. That's a far cry from the position of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan; simply echoes the NDP's opposition to dual marketing.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Alberta Liberal Agriculture credit for . . . critic for taking a stand. And I'd like to encourage his Saskatchewan counterpart to give him a call. He might learn a little bit about what Saskatchewan and western Canadian farmers want and deserve— dual marketing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Todd McLellan Wins Award

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Swift Current

Broncos of the western junior hockey league are one of the organizations of which we are justifiably proud. They have won the Memorial Cup and they are consistently a threat to repeat. Hope springs eternal as we know, Mr. Speaker.

This year we have another reason to be proud. Todd McLellan, head coach and general manager of the Broncos, has been selected as the Western Hockey League Executive of the Year. He was also selected as Coach of the Year for the east/central divisions of the league and runner-up for the whole league.

At 29 years of age, he is the youngest head coach and general manager in the league; and this is his third year as a coach. He knows the league well because he played in it, as well as playing on the Canadian national team.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is another reason for mentioning this award and congratulating Todd McLellan; Todd's father Bill is one of the ushers in the legislature. And will come in no surprise to the hon. members on this side of the House, that Bill is an usher on the government side. A wise choice of sons and a judicious placement in the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — I congratulate Todd McLellan, and express on behalf of our community, our appreciation for his work in restoring both competitiveness and dignity to the Swift Current Broncos. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Midwifery Services

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, this government announced today that it will be taking the first steps toward legalizing midwifery in Saskatchewan. On the premiss that such services can be offered in a safe and properly regulated environment, we support this option for our expectant mothers.

The Minister of Health has indicated however that health districts will be free to hire midwives if they determine there is a need for service.

Mr. Speaker, the one problem we see with this point is the fact that these services will not be universally available in this province. Those districts which have the financial resources to hire midwives may do so, but those who are walking a financial tightrope will not have this option.

Can the Minister of Health explain how his government will ensure that this option is available to all Saskatchewan women who favour this alternative?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I'm pleased to report to the member, Mr. Speaker, that we intend to back-fill every Liberal cut to health care. And I think the member will be pleased to know,

Mr. Speaker, that despite the fact that the Liberals are cutting back on health care spending, contrary to the advice they're receiving from their own National Forum on Health, we're putting the money back in and the health districts this year and next year will end with surpluses, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Arm River got up the other day and said that the health districts would have deficits. I want to correct the member for Arm River. Cumulatively the health districts across the province will have a surplus of \$2.5 million this fiscal year, and a higher surplus next year. And I can assure the member that despite the Liberal cut-backs to health care, the New Democrats will put enough money into the system that we can hire midwives and . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Evidently the minister didn't understand the question so I'll repeat it. Can the Minister of Health explain how his government will ensure that this option is available — and that's midwifery — to all Saskatchewan women who favour this alternative?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to assure the member and the House, Mr. Speaker, that this morning I attended the meeting of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, and I want to assure the member and the House that services will be continually delivered through health districts. Because I had a discussion with the health districts about the Liberal plans to abolish health districts and go back to 450 separate health boards hand-picked by the Leader of the Liberal Party, and I can assure the member that the health organizations are not in favour of that Liberal policy. They are in favour of population-based funding. They are in favour of the New Democrats back-filling the Liberal cuts to health care.

We will continue to take those steps, Mr. Speaker, which will ensure that women will have access to the services that they need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, this government has gutted our health care system to such a point that our maternity wards have a better resemblance to chicken hatcheries than maternity wards.

In our rural areas there is so little faith in the present health care system that physicians continue to leave in droves. I brought to the attention of the House yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the fact that Eatonia's only doctor has announced he will soon be departing that community. His decision was brought on by the uncertain future of rural health care in the province.

The head of the Touchwood Qu'Appelle Health District has already indicated that legalizing midwifery may help in areas where there is a physician shortage. Will the minister explain if midwifery may in time be the only choice available to women in rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to assure the member and assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that a full range of physician and hospital and health centre services are going to be available in all parts of this province.

Because we reject the plan of the Leader of the Liberal Party to adopt an Australian model, which says that we should have hospitals only in Regina and Saskatoon, and that we should not have hospitals outside of those centres. And we reject the model that says that physician services should only be available in communities of more than 10,000 people. That is the plan that the Leader of the Liberal Party in his leadership bid said that he favoured, Mr. Speaker.

But I can assure the member that we're going to continue what we are doing, and that is to ensure physician services across the province. And just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the member will be interested to know, we announced the physician recruitment coordinator. We're going to take a lot of steps, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be putting in place new recruitment practices for the health districts. We're going to be working with the College of Medicine, physicians, and the health districts to improve our physician supply in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highway Maintenance

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Highways. Mr. Minister, last Friday there were several vehicle mishaps near the community of Ponteix. Damage to vehicles ranged from hundreds of dollars to total vehicle write-offs.

The problem, Mr. Minister, was that rising flood waters had extensively damaged a bridge on the highway leading into the community. Mr. Minister, not only were these people caught by surprise, but obviously you and your Department of Highways were also caught by surprise. There were no warning signs, no danger signs, nothing, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, you ordered almost 7,000 warning flags last year and probably more this year. However either there aren't enough flags, or you're saving them. Which is it, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House, it's a good time I think to give a little report on the flood situation in Saskatchewan and on road locations.

Nine kilometres south of Bushell Park there's water on the road and we're recommending reduced speed; 24 kilometres north of Kamsack to 15 kilometres south of Pelly there's water on the road, Mr. Speaker; 16 kilometres west of Aneroid to 17 kilometres east of Cadillac there's a local detour — the road is closed, the bridge is out, and reduced speed required to be prepared to stop.

But I'm not going to continue. I think what I want to show, Mr.

Speaker, is that the Department of Highways is certainly on top of the situation, a very serious situation. In fact if people would call the highway road information line at 787-4986 they would get updated information on an immediate situation and we'll continue to do that — to provide the service that Saskatchewan people deserve.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, perhaps an answer to the question instead of a ministerial statement would have been more in order.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, one of the vehicles damaged was driven by Kathy Knox of Ponteix. Kathy was taking her son Dylan to school Friday morning when her vehicle was damaged so bad that the frame was bent, the transmission crushed, not to mention wheels, axles, on and on. Kathy says she didn't see a thing until it was too late. There were no flags, no warning signs.

Mr. Minister, this problem is the result of your government's continuing to downsize and underfund the highway crews in Saskatchewan. Is this what you would call safe and acceptable for people taking their children to school? Is the safety of our children not a priority to this government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well certainly I would encourage the lady that you mentioned to contact the department, and/or my office door is always open. You certainly can bring me the information. We'll look into the matter.

But what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that this government has committed \$2.5 billion to highways in this province over the next 10 years. And what does the member opposite do? He criticizes that, Mr. Speaker. He says, oh, we would have spent more and we would have cut more in taxes. And you know what we would have gotten? The same thing as we had 10 years previous, Mr. Speaker — huge debts and huge deficits and huge interest payments.

And we don't govern that way, Mr. Speaker. We committed \$2.5 billion to the highways in the province of Saskatchewan and we're going to keep that promise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, whether you want to admit it or not you are responsible for the highways in Saskatchewan. When people such as Kathy Knox have their vehicles damaged as a result of the highways that your government refuses to fix and repair, the cost can be enormous. In addition to the repairs, people are faced with the deductibles on their insurance claims and further costs when they need to lease vehicles while theirs are being repaired. These costs and repairs are not the fault of Saskatchewan drivers, Mr. Speaker. They are your government's fault.

Will you stand in your place today and agree to pay all costs

that people face, when it is your highway system at fault?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Speaker, it's quite interesting, this line of questioning. You know, I've listened to the budget awhile back and everybody in Saskatchewan . . . the majority of people are really happy with the budget — 2 two per cent reduction in sales tax; \$2.5 billion to roads. And we have a Liberal Party on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that criticizes it every day. They're trying to look for something, I guess, a hole in it, or something. I don't know. I guess we surprised them.

But what I want to say to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, is that we have asked the federal government to contribute or join with us — all the provinces — on the national highways program. And we get a no. That's what we get.

Now I know Mr. Goodale, in an interview recently said:

The federal government has been willing to work on this issue but it is an area of the provincial jurisdiction, and we've been told, quite frankly, to keep out of it.

This is what Mr. Goodale said. But the editor in this case had to correct Mr. Goodale and he's got an editor's note:

The current federal government announced a national cost-shared program for highway improvements early in its mandate after Saskatchewan and the other provinces drew the plans for highway improvements to be cost-shared between the provinces and the federal government.

And it's the federal government that withdrew from the offer, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, how could the minister stand in this House and say we want a shared program with other levels of government and you can't even get flags up over potholes. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, among the vehicles that received a rough ride over the Ponteix bridge was the Wald Ambulance of Assiniboia. Luckily, the ambulance had not yet picked up their patient because the driver and his assistant were thrown around the vehicle and the assistant smashed his head into the windshield. The owners of Wald Ambulance are Alice and Stu Wald of Assiniboia, and they say they are fed up with the horrible condition of the roads that they have to transport their patients on.

Mr. Minister, it was a painful experience for the people of rural Saskatchewan when your government closed our rural hospitals. Do you not agree that at the very least your highways and roads should be safe for the sick, the elderly, and those in need who must now receive their health care elsewhere?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give the

number to the member opposite again, and if he wants information on the highways in his area he can call the highway road information line at 787-4986.

I want to mention too while I'm here, Mr. Speaker, that 10 kilometres west of Ponteix grid to 10 kilometres east of Val Marie, we need to reduce speed there because there is water on the road as well. That's on Highway No. 18. On Highway No. 37, 19 kilometres north of the U.S. (United States) border to 4 kilometres south of Climax, there's also water on the road.

On Highway 332, 43 kilometres east of Cantuar to Hazlet, we need to reduce speed there, Mr. Speaker. There's flag persons in attendance and we have to be prepared to stop because there's also water on the road there. Highway 339, Mr. Speaker, from 16 kilometres west of Avonlea to 27 kilometres south of junction Highway 39, you have to reduce the speed there too, Mr. Speaker, because there is also water on the road.

So I believe that the department has things under control, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I would . . . if the member from Wood River would call the hot line, he would get information on an updated basis throughout the day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Jaw Implants

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Health minister. Mr. Minister, Sharon Schriener underwent surgery 12 years ago for a large tumour on her jaw. Because of the size of the tumour, part of Sharon's jaw had to be removed. Today, because of bone degeneration resulting from the surgery, Sharon requires jaw implants. You can imagine Rob and Sharon's surprise when they were informed that such implants are not covered by the Health department and are considered cosmetic and that they're expected to pick up the bill that will run somewhere between 7,500 to \$10,000.

Mr. Minister, this is not a face-lift, this is not an eye job, or some other optional cosmetic surgery that is understandably not covered by health care — this is a wellness matter. This is not cosmetic surgery. We're talking about a necessary medical procedure needed because someone had a tumour removed. Her doctor said that she would be a dental cripple by 55 if this procedure is not done.

Why are you refusing to cover Sharon's implants, Mr. Minister? And will you please meet with the Schrieners after question period?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I very much regret that the member did not apprise me of this situation because I certainly would want to look into it, and the member raises it for the first time in the legislature. I want to assure the member that I would be very happy to look into it and I'd be happy also to talk to the Schrieners.

And I also want to assure the member if at any time one of his constituents has this kind of problem, and in performing his duties he wishes to speak to me about it, I think the member

knows, Mr. Speaker, that my door is always open to him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, another question regarding the Schriener case . . . But first of all I'd just like to remind the minister of the fact that on numerous occasions when their party was on this side of the House, they dragged in all kinds of people into this Assembly.

I would like to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, when we have talked about cases, we have talked to individuals, we have contacted individuals who have contacted the department and have not got an answer.

Mr. Minister, number one, will you meet with the Schrieners? And, Mr. Minister, as well will you support a Bill that I propose to introduce right after question period that will give people an opportunity to talk to an ombudsman, someone outside of Health, to negotiate or to discuss these types of matters? Will you provide Saskatchewan families with a badly needed health care ombudsman, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I think the other member knows, because he has been in this legislature for more than 10 years, that if matters are brought to the attention of the Minister of Health those matters will be looked into. And that member has not brought this matter forward as part of his responsibilities as a member of this Assembly either. But I've already indicated to the House, Mr. Speaker, that I will meet with the Schrieners in an effort to look into this situation. That's what should properly be done. And I will certainly do so.

I think what the member should know, Mr. Speaker, is that in every health district there is a client representative, or quality-of-care coordinator whose job it is to handle complaints and problems with the health system. The member does not acknowledge that there is already an ombudsperson in every health district, Mr. Speaker. And the member also could have taken advantage of that situation. But notwithstanding the fact that the member has never brought this matter forward to me, I'll be very happy to look into it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Reductions in Business Regulations

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Minister, your study on the competitiveness of Saskatchewan's business climate promised in your *Partnership for Growth* document is already behind schedule. It's not the only target in your *Partnership for Growth* that isn't being met. You promised to cut business regulation and red tape by 25 per cent over the next 10 years. And that's a pretty modest target, Mr. Minister — just 2.5 per cent per year.

However we see no evidence that even this 2.5 per cent target

has been met. We see no evidence that you have cut business regulations at all over the last year. Mr. Minister, would you table a list of the business regulations you have eliminated over the past year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Economic Development, who is out of the city on government business, I want to tell the Leader of the Third Party that we are committed to taking a look at all regulations. Not only regulations which affect business, but all regulations, because there is a tendency of governments, whether they're Progressive Conservative or Liberal or New Democrat, to just accumulate the regulations over a period of time. They remain on the books. Many of them are not valid and not relevant to public policy.

And we are now engaging in a major review of all regulations, including those that affect and impact on business. It is quite an intensive study. I don't know when we're going to be able to give you the specific number of regulations which are going to be called, but in due course we'll have to make a full report obviously to the House. I can simply report to the members and the public this process is well under way now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan's 1993 Budget Crisis

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since the budget the Finance minister and the Premier have stated that the province was on the brink of bankruptcy in 1993. In the same breath they've indicated that they will soon be making a trek to international investment bankers to negotiate on behalf of our province. My question is to either the Finance minister or the Premier this afternoon.

Given that underwriting may have been under consideration at the time of the so-called potential default, was full and complete disclosure made to the financial community regarding possible default of Saskatchewan's debt?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'll be going to New York and to Toronto to deal with the rating agencies and those who buy Saskatchewan bonds. The question that the minister answers has to be answered . . . asked, I'm sorry, the member asks, has to be answered very, very simply and clearly. And it's patently obvious. The answer is yes.

There is no way that any government in Canada, provincial or federal, doesn't have its books scrutinized by the rating agencies for creditworthiness. They come up here once a year for two or three days and take a look at the books. That's why I go down there to explain what the budget's about.

I might also point out for the member's edification that in April 1996 the Bank of Canada had a provincial credit rating study. I've got a copy of it. It says this, quote:

Based on Standard and Poor's ratings, the long-term debt

of Saskatchewan was downgraded in five steps between 1986 and 1992 from AA plus to BBB plus. The number of prospective institutional buyers of Saskatchewan bonds is estimated to have fallen from 125 to 140 when the province's rating was AA plus, to about 25 to 30 at the current rating of BBB plus.

Now people say that this is not a serious matter. It's crisis. It's an extremely critical matter at the time. If you're reduced to 25 borrowers, all you need to do is get one more downgrade . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Next question.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised by the Premier's response, but I think perhaps that he and his Minister of Finance should get on the same page. And I'm going to quote the *Leader-Post*, Monday, March 24. And this is the Minister of Finance for the province of Saskatchewan speaking, sir. Quote:

And then he (meaning Don Mazankowski) talked about what they could do and how they could funnel money into the province without it becoming apparent. Because the most dangerous part of that scenario is that it becomes, in any sense, public, because then it can really undermine your credit rating.

I guess I need to ask the question again, because I liken this very much to a man going to the bank for a new loan only to brag to the manager that four years prior, Mr. Speaker, he got a previous loan and that he was on the brink of bankruptcy at that time but didn't bother disclosing it.

Now which in fact is true? What the Premier has just stated, that they were making full disclosure to the financial banking institutions, or they were not, as the Finance minister has said?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect to the member from Greystone, the answer that I gave still applies. And may I add also that *The Globe and Mail*, March 25, 1997, page A5, in a very correct description of the circumstances, if I may add, says the following:

Mr. Mazankowski, then a member of prime minister Brian Mulroney's cabinet, said in an interview yesterday that publicly discussing Saskatchewan's problem could have worsened fiscal problems faced by the province.

That's what Mr. Mazankowski said. It only stands to common sense that it would have. We were not going to allow this province to go into bankruptcy. We were going to do everything that we had to do in order to make sure that it wouldn't fall into bankruptcy.

But I'm telling you that when you're reduced from 140 prospective borrowers to 25, thanks to the mismanagement of the provincial Conservatives, by Mr. Mazankowski's yardstick, by the Bank of Canada's yardstick, because they had emergency measures into place, this was — you pick your word

for it — crisis, near bankruptcy. You describe it however you want to describe it. It was a very serious matter which, thanks to the people of Saskatchewan, we turned around and today we're able to report the good news budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — My question to the Premier or to the Minister of Finance is very simple, Mr. Speaker. And that is, do you believe, Mr. Premier, that the comments that you and your Minister of Finance have made in the recent days has placed the province's credibility at risk in any way, and that this may lead potentially to higher bond yields with dealing with future underwritings, given the circumstances under which this was disclosed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is just as obvious, if I may say so, as the first question. The answer is no. No, it doesn't put anything at risk.

I said in the first question, as I say in this question, the rating agencies know exactly what our books are and what the transfer payments are. This, if anything, will strengthen the position of the province of Saskatchewan. It will demonstrate to the rating agencies that we had a game plan when we took office on November 1, 1991, a game plan which we followed — which, I might add, you criticized every step of the way and the Conservatives criticized every step of the way, and the current Liberals still criticize every step of the way. A game plan which we followed with the help of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, which allows us today to say, we've turned the corner. If anything I'm able to go to Toronto, to New York, and to say, look what all the people of Saskatchewan have done together in cooperative effort. It's going to help us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 206 — The Saskatchewan Health Ombudsman Act

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 206, an Act to establish a health care system ombudsman be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 213 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1997 (FREE VOTES)

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move an Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act (FREE VOTES) be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request that no. 27 be converted to a notice of motion for order for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — Item no. 1 is converted to motions for return (debatable).

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance, the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Gantefer, and the proposed subamendment thereto moved by Mr. Boyd.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to enter into this budget speech debate today and to express my support for what is indeed a good news budget.

Before I begin that, I want to first of all congratulate the new member from the Battlefords for his election to the legislature. I had an opportunity to do a little campaigning in that by-election and I note that the member was able to win the seat by a slim margin of some 200 votes. I know that the people of North Battleford and area will be watching himself in the legislature with great interest. And I'm sure that the member will bring some debate to this legislature and I look forward to serving with him in the next couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the people of my own constituency of Saskatoon Nutana for their ongoing support of myself and this government. I particularly want to thank the activists in my constituency who over the years have helped this government and myself come to the point where they have an NDP member of the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my constituency assistant, who like all of our constituency assistants, is back at home operating on our behalf, dealing with our constituents when we're here sitting in the legislature. Our constituency assistants get hundreds of phone calls and requests for information and they have to endeavour to do casework. And I think that all of us need to acknowledge from time to time the work that they do.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is indeed good news for Saskatchewan people; it's good news for Saskatchewan's future. And while this is indeed a good news budget, Mr. Speaker, we must never forget the challenges that Saskatchewan people have had to face and overcome in these past five years.

In 1991 this province had the highest per capita deficit in Canada — the legacy of 10 years of Progressive Conservative fiscal mismanagement. Annual interest payments were consuming a growing share of the provincial budget each year. We were on a financial path that was simply not sustainable. And we were mortgaging the future of Saskatchewan and the future of our young people.

But together we in this province rolled up our sleeves and we got to work. We set clear objectives and we stuck to those objectives. We decided we'd get our fiscal house in order. We ensured that our finances stayed in order well into the future. We thought we could provide tax relief as it was affordable and sustainable. And we targeted any additional available resources to key areas like jobs, education, social programs, highways, and health.

That is what our government set out to do, Mr. Speaker. That is the plan that we developed with Saskatchewan people and that we consistently communicated to them. And that is exactly what we've done. Together we've overcome the financial disaster that was the legacy of the previous PC government. And together we have also overcome the challenges of the sharp reduction in federal transfers by the Liberal government to all provinces for health, post-secondary education, and social programs. That is why today, Mr. Speaker, all Saskatchewan people are able to share in the benefits of the 1997 provincial budget.

When our government took office we made a solemn promise to the citizens of this province. We promised compassion, we promised cooperation, and we promised a commitment to the future of this province. We promised to restore financial responsibility, we promised to rebuild our economy, and we promised to invest in programs and services for our people. Mr. Speaker, we have kept that promise and this budget proudly invests in our people.

During the course of this budget debate over the last several days, Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the remarks of the opposition members. I will be particularly interested to hear the remarks now that they have had a chance to learn what their own constituents think about this budget. And I've had an opportunity to review some of those remarks.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, how will they vote on the budget? This budget. Will they vote for a budget that provides more money for the action plan for Saskatchewan children? How will they vote on a budget that provides more money for education, that provides more money for highways this year and a solid plan into the future; on a budget that provides more money for job training, police services, and health care, Mr. Speaker? How will they vote, Mr. Speaker, on this budget which reduces the total overall debt of the province and which sets out a sound plan for future balanced budgets and still puts more towards debt reduction? And finally, Mr. Speaker, how will the members opposite vote on this budget which provides the single largest and most broadly based tax reduction in the history of our province?

I will be watching. I will be watching their vote on this budget

with great interest, Mr. Speaker, and so will their constituents and all of the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Now before turning to specific comments about the Department of Education's budget, let me first say a brief word about the men and women who work so conscientiously in our public education system. Mr. Speaker, we have thousands and thousands of dedicated staff, teachers, and trustees who work so effectively in schools and classrooms all across the province.

Unlike the situation in some other provinces, Mr. Speaker. In Liberal Newfoundland they just laid off close to 500 students . . . or 500 teachers. In Quebec, Mr. Speaker, they have cut educational spending dramatically to the point where property taxes are going to increase overwhelmingly, particularly in places like Montreal.

Mr. Speaker, unlike these other provinces, Saskatchewan people hold our public education system in high regard. And last week, Mr. Speaker, was Education Week, an appropriate time for all of us to celebrate the many accomplishments of our schools, our teachers, and our students.

We celebrate the dedication and compassion for those who work in our community schools, providing special services to some very special children. We celebrate the flexibility of those who serve smaller rural schools with multi-grade classrooms, ensuring that every young person receives a high quality education no matter where they live in this province.

We celebrate the energy of those who work so effectively with our middle-year students, the exciting and challenging young people at the beginning of adolescence. And, Mr. Speaker, we celebrate the effectiveness of those who work with our high school students, young men and women preparing to enter the broader world beyond school, the broader world of work, further education, and adulthood.

Saskatchewan people are extremely proud of their public education system. And Saskatchewan people are committed to ensuring that our public education in this province is second to none in Canada. Mr. Speaker, this government, my colleagues on this side of the House, share that commitment to education. And this budget demonstrates that commitment.

In order to get the most out of their education, students need schools that are clean, safe, and healthy. That takes capital funding to provide for repairs, renovations, and necessary new construction. This budget increases, Mr. Speaker, our annual capital investment in schools by over 40 per cent. We provide an additional \$5 million to upgrade and modernize our schools and our classrooms.

And operating grants, Mr. Speaker, to schools are increasing by \$8 million this year and a further \$6 million in the following year. This represents an important turnaround from just a year ago, Mr. Speaker, when the budget last March predicted further cuts in school operating grants. In fact with this new budget, operating grants over the next two years will be significantly higher than school boards had expected and will be \$22 million higher than the actual level this past year. That's good news,

Mr. Speaker, for everyone in public education. And it's good news for our province.

But our government's commitment to public education is demonstrated not only in the absolute funding levels. It's also demonstrated by the fact the provincial operating grants are increasing as a proportion of total expenditures. The figures announced and published in the budget address clearly demonstrate that from the year now ending through the next two years, provincial operating grants to schools are increasing as a proportion of total provincial budgetary expenditures.

(1430)

Now let me summarize the highlights. A 40 per cent increase in capital funding; an \$8 million increase in operating grants coming this year and an additional \$5.8 million in the following year; continuing strong support for our made-in-Saskatchewan core curriculum, which was developed cooperatively by all of our partners in education and which is now being implemented cooperatively in all of our classrooms.

And our commitment, Mr. Speaker, to increase the share — listen carefully — increase the share of total education costs borne by the provincial government as our financial resources permit, in order to reduce the share borne by local property taxpayers. Our Premier has made that commitment and our government has made that commitment.

We hear a great deal, Mr. Speaker, about the imminent arrival of the new century, moving into the 21st century. And as we reflect on the many changes that we have in store for ourselves and for our society, we must remember our young people, our students.

The students who are today in our elementary and secondary schools will spend their entire lives in the 21st century. Today more than 80 per cent of the schools in the province are connected to the Internet, and the number is growing every month. Access to a window on the world and to the information highway is critical in order to prepare our students to be well-informed and productive citizens moving into the next millennium.

But technology alone, Mr. Speaker, is not the answer, and it never can be the answer. For our students need more. Above all, Mr. Speaker, our students need the support of their parents, they need the support of their teachers, and they need the support of our whole community as they address the single most critical task of human beings — growing up into mature, healthy, caring, and responsible adults.

They need the support of a quality education system, the kind of supports that are enhanced through this budget, Mr. Speaker. The 1997 budget is indeed good news. It's a budget for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, because the people of this province have made sacrifices in order that we could get to this day.

Mr. Speaker, the teachers in this province have made sacrifices in order that we could get to this day. Our civil servants have

made sacrifices. And taxpayers have made sacrifices, Mr. Speaker, because they've been asked to pay more in order to get our fiscal house in order.

Mr. Speaker, I'm particularly proud that this is a good news budget for our schools and our classrooms, for our teachers and our students.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that I had the opportunity to read with great interest some of the remarks made by the Acting Leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the Liberal Party in the House, who also happens to have an interest in education.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I read — because I wasn't here to hear his speech — I read with interest some of his remarks, particularly as it pertained to the provincial sales tax. And I just want to put it on the public record, Mr. Speaker, that I and my colleagues on this side of the House were aware for a few weeks that there would be a lowering of the provincial sales tax. But I want to put it on the record, Mr. Speaker, that I did not change my shopping patterns and neither did my colleagues, and that I take great offence, I take great offence to whatever was insinuated. Whether it was a joke or a jest or whatever, I take great offence.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that the members of this House, if we are to increase the elevation of politics and how people view politicians in this province, that we need to be careful about what we say to each other, particularly on the floor of the legislature.

It seems to me that when we go to some of the functions that we're all invited to, that there seems to be a great deal of collegiality and there is civility. And I would ask that all of us be mindful that there are people watching us, and they're watching us with interest. And what's important is that we conduct ourselves on the floor of the legislature and not in any sense impugn the integrity of each other.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the weeks ahead . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, in the weeks ahead, I know we will have great debates. I know that we will have occasion when we will agree with each other and we will vote on similar pieces of legislation that will have the support of all members of the legislature.

There will be debate when we vehemently disagree with each other. But I would ask, as a longer serving member of the legislature, someone who's been here practically 11 years, that came here as a young person who's rapidly growing into a middle-aged woman, that we treat each other with respect. And I'm sure that when we leave this House, if we can manage to do that, that the citizens of this province will have a higher regard for their political leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I am going to vote in favour of this budget. I am going to vote for a budget that has reduced the debt. I'm going to vote for a budget that reduces people's taxes,

and I am going to vote for a budget that puts money into key public priority areas like health, like education, like highways, like jobs, and other social programs. For my part, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you I will be voting in favour of this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the House, before I begin to speak I would ask leave to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after question period I had the opportunity of just talking to the guests I had introduced earlier, and in the process I ran into a family from Minnesota who happened to be sitting here observing the proceedings today — the Nicola family from Minnesota. And they're visiting family and friends over the Easter break, and their daughter as well had just informed me that she's looking forward to visiting their state legislature next week.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we certainly want to welcome them to our province, to our Assembly. We trust that you'll find the state legislature just as civilized as this legislature here in the province of Saskatchewan, and we certainly welcome you and let's show our traditional welcome to our American guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to take a lot of time this afternoon in speaking to the budget speech but I do want to take a moment to put a few things on the record. I found with interest as I listened to the Minister of Education speaking as she wrapped up her speech, some interesting comments about procedure in the Assembly.

And what I find very interesting, Mr. Speaker, is having been here and having been elected in 1986 and having sat on the government side of the Assembly and now to sit on the opposition side of the Assembly, I observe and I've observed the procedure as it was when the former government was in place and many of the members, including the Minister of Education, were on this side of the House. It was interesting to note how all of a sudden we're supposed to be just a very calm and well-mannered group of individuals.

And while I believe in that, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there are times that the debate certainly draws all individuals into the debate. And there have been many times when I sat on the other

side of the House, and while I think the comment was made about growing from a young woman into a middle-aged woman, I think, Mr. Speaker, we're kind of all showing our age a little bit. I don't know what it is but . . . what it is about this place, but . . .

Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of how the debate takes place in this Assembly. And I find it interesting that now current government members feel that this place should be a lot quieter. Well the unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, if we were all to succumb to that, we may as well pack up our bags and go home.

I think that's what the government's basically saying with their budget speech. They're basically saying, pack up your bags and go home; it's such a good news budget. We've offered the people of Saskatchewan everything they asked for. We've offered people, the people of Saskatchewan, tax reduction; we've put more money into health care; we've put more money into . . . more money into education. We're putting more money into highways. We're putting . . . we're offering a tax break to the agricultural producers of Saskatchewan.

And I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that someone in the opposition side at least stand up and address some of these concerns. Regarding the 2 per cent tax reduction, Mr. Speaker, I will join my colleagues, and we have already indicated that we are very well supportive. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we raised that concern. We went to the public in 1995 in the general election suggesting that the income tax . . . or the PST (provincial sales tax) could be reduced from 9 per cent to 7 per cent.

And, Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing is, why were we at 9 per cent? We were at 9 per cent because this government had increased the provincial sales tax to 9 per cent. And we offered the people of Saskatchewan . . . And the members are asking why. And I appreciate that because I look forward to getting into more debate as to the why's, as to the why's they felt . . . And just to point out that much of the problems that were faced by the former government can be laid right at their feet. And as well, Mr. Speaker, there were many choices that were made to indeed address the deficit during the '80s. But we'll get into that in a moment.

But when we get back to the provincial sales tax, as my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, had indicated, Mr. Speaker, the member from Kindersley, we were certainly pleased to see the government had finally listened to the taxpayers of this province and to the third party of this province in reducing the provincial sales tax.

Why, Mr. Speaker? Because if you look around you, and if every resident in this province takes a look at what has happened, while the Minister of Finance and the Premier of this province have told us that we haven't increased your taxes, the facts are since 1991 taxes have gone up \$1,400 for every family in this province. And the Minister of Finance says, well we didn't really increase your taxes. Well she can stand here and basically argue yes, we haven't.

But, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the auditor. While she says no,

we didn't increase your taxes directly, other than we increased the provincial sales tax by 2 per cent, every time there was a power rate increase, every time there was an increase in SaskTel, every time SaskEnergy had an increase, Mr. Speaker, or the reductions in funding to education and the increases at the property tax level or the decreases in funding to municipal governments and an increase in the property tax level . . . Mr. Speaker, what is that when people have to dig into their pockets more. In my terms, in my understanding of fiscal policy, that is a tax grab; that is a tax increase. And the people of Saskatchewan have been paying more taxes.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I'm not mistaken, the Premier suggested in 1991 that his government . . . if he was elected government, and if they eliminated all the waste and mismanagement that they talked about, that they could operate and run this province on \$4.5 billion — \$4.5 billion.

I just looked at . . . I was just looking the other day at the audited statements, and I find that this government has been taking more than almost \$5.7 billion out of the pockets of the people of this province. And he could operate on 4.5.

And the minister . . . and the member from Rosetown talks about the interest bill. Well the member from Rosetown maybe should go back a little bit and look at what the interest bill was in 1982. And he can say, well there was \$139 million surplus on the general revenue side. True. That is true — 139 million surplus on the general revenue side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — But what about the Crown entities. What about the unfunded pension liability? And I think there's about five members still in this Assembly that are going to live off that unfunded pension liability that the rest of us are going to have to pay for.

An unfunded pension liability which since 1991 has grown by \$600 million — \$600 million. And I find it interesting that the Premier continually neglects to mention that unfunded pension liability. The Premier doesn't want to talk about it because he doesn't want to admit that the pension plan that he hopes to survive on is underfunded and that somebody might have to pay for it at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at some of the problems . . . and while I will admit that there were some difficult decisions and maybe some costly decisions made during the '80s, I don't know of a government that hasn't made mistakes. I don't know of a government that hasn't made decisions that have been costly.

And the member from Regina is hollering from his seat. He'd probably like to bring up GigaText. But what about Nabu? Who started the Nabu process? Who lost the \$5 million prior to 1982 when that even had a greater value than GigaText? And yes GigaText was a mistake; we'll admit that.

But I would ask any member today if the expenditure in Rafferty-Alameda was a mistake. I'd like to ask the members today if the expenditure in Saskferco was a mistake. I'm sure that the Minister of Finance is just thrilled to see the revenue that is being generated as a result of the Saskferco plant that is operating to capacity and just turning out fertilizer. Rather than us having to go outside of the province and importing it, we are an exporter of fertilizer products to the provinces and drawing revenue to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I find as well it's interesting that the members opposite would like to blame the Devine government when, Mr. Speaker, in 1982, who went to the New York money markets, borrowed the money, invested it in holes in the ground, and turned the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, which was a revenue generator to the province, into a sinkhole for government funds? By 1986, \$1.2 billion in debt — the Potash Corporation was — that had to be written off. That certainly wasn't, that certainly wasn't the former government's fault. It was an investment made in the 1970s when times were good, Mr. Speaker, that came back to haunt the Conservatives, that this government even has to deal with today.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, that's very interesting, and maybe the members opposite should go back into the blue book and read about it. I believe the member from Regina South — I'm not sure if that's the exact location but — made a comment about the Heritage Fund. Well maybe he should take a look at what the blue book has to say about the Heritage Fund.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that the investment that this government got themselves involved into in the '70s where they went and borrowed money in the foreign money markets and bought Saskatchewan land, forcing . . . driving the price of land up to the point that many farmers were in difficulty in the '80s.

Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, that while they bought that land, while they borrowed the money outside of the province, while they borrowed at high interest rates, Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing that I found out is they entered into rental agreements, rental agreements which through the 1980s did not draw enough revenue to pay even half of the interest on that money.

So where did it come from? And it's all out on the *Public Accounts*. It's in the public documents. The government, through the '80s, had to go to the Heritage Fund to the tune of anywhere from 9 to \$12 million to top up this land bank scheme that this government had entered into.

And that's, Mr. Speaker . . . when you look at it and when you take a look at what the auditor's comments about the budget that was presented the other day, it's very interesting, Mr. Speaker. As you start to look at the total picture of the government of the province of Saskatchewan, it's really interesting to note how this Premier and this Finance minister, how they choose the numbers and the way they want to present the finances of the province of Saskatchewan.

While we appreciate what's been done on the provincial sales

tax side, one I guess politically would sit back and say, well boy, that's great, but how come now? You know, we're about two years away, at least two years from a provincial budget. You'd think the government's going to hold off and present a little more closer to a provincial budget. Is it because there's a federal budget on the horizon and they're trying to prop up their colleagues in this province to unseat some of the Liberals that are currently here, that are probably going to lose anyway? I don't know. I don't know if they have to do that to get rid of any federal Liberals. I think there are, I think there are a lot of opportunities out there.

The Speaker: — Order, order. All hon. members on both sides of the House will recognize that it's inappropriate to be attempting to enter your remarks into debate by shouting across the floor. And I'll ask all hon. members to allow the hon. member for Moosomin to be able to continue his debate in an unimpeded manner.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when . . . It doesn't matter how you look at it, it's time the Premier, it's time the Minister of Finance, became honest with the public of Saskatchewan. It's time they became honest with the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, these government . . . the government members talking about open and accountable.

In the last session of the Public Accounts Committee government members voted against a motion that would have indeed opened up and made the government more accountable. A motion brought forward by the Provincial Auditor.

In fact a suggestion that I heard coming from the federal auditor, as I attended the IPAC (Institute of Public Administration of Canada) breakfast meeting this morning. A suggestion that governments got to become . . . need to become more open, more accountable. And to do that they need to present all the books, wide open, from your general revenue to your Crown sector to any other resource or revenue generation that the province — the province or the federal government — has. And when the auditor tells us that it's playing and it's monkeying around with numbers, I think for far too long, this government's been doing that.

And now we find this government trying to tell us that they needed a bail-out. Well it's kind of interesting that those awful federal Tories would come to the defence of a province that was in such dire financial straits — \$45 million is going to put them under — when there is a \$130 million that they had in a slush fund, Mr. Speaker, that had been accumulated from liquor and gaming, Mr. Speaker.

And there was certainly potash revenues available as a result of the privatization of the Potash Corporation — which I thank the members opposite for finally completing the transaction that has allowed that company to become one of the largest potash or fertilizer companies in the world, Mr. Speaker — deriving revenue and revenue generation to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that I could go on at length. I probably

have gone longer than I had intended to, but I want to just bring out a couple points. A couple points, and just point out some of the areas that . . . the inconsistencies in this budget. The minister talked about . . . or the Finance minister talked about increases in funding to education. The Minister of Education just talked about those financial increases.

I read from the SSTA — the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association — is telling us the fact is that any money provided in the budget has already been spent. Basically, what are they saying, Mr. Speaker? They're telling us that it's no new money. They're really answering . . . What the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education are doing was answering a request put by our caucus, in asking the government to now, once you've negotiated a contract with teachers, put the money up to guarantee that, rather than asking boards to take from funding that was already theirs. And the opposition raised that. The opposition side of the House raised that, Mr. Speaker, back in the spring budget.

So while we would be led to believe that it's new money that's going to provide more education, the reality is it's just filling a hole that the government had already created.

So we're pleased to see that there's more money put into it. At least it gives the boards the opportunity to use the dollars they have there right now to currently look at and continue with the ongoing programs that they already have in place.

What about health care, Mr. Speaker? That 59 million — 59 million. I believe the Minister of Health told us today that it will . . . the current health districts will now have an increase or a surplus at the end of the year. Well I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, health districts are going to be pleased to see an injection of \$59 million. The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, is, will everyone be onboard once the money is divided up?

And I think that's an area that opposition members and our caucus are going to have to be cognizant of, making sure that the money is distributed evenly; that it's made available to areas outside of Saskatoon and Regina; that every health board has equal access to the funds that should be coming to them. And I think that's very important. That's a key component.

And on the other side, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the deficits that health boards are facing, there won't be a lot of real money left for real programs. And that is going to be . . . that is an issue that's going to have . . . continue to be a problem that we're going to have to continue to address.

And, Mr. Speaker, this tax credit to agriculture. What I find really interesting about that is the fact that the government talked about a tax rebate on livestock equipment or buildings and facilities. And I thought to myself, well that's nice, because we're talking about diversification and there's a lot of people throughout the province of Saskatchewan look at diversifying their operations. Some are getting into small feed lot operations; some are getting into cow-calf operations. There are a number of large hog operations coming into the province.

The part that really disturbed me was when I got to about the

end of the newsletter that came from the Department of Agriculture and it said there's a \$500 deductible on this program — \$500 deductible.

Mr. Speaker, what it boils down to is, unless you're prepared to invest more than \$7,000 — get into a large operation — you basically don't qualify. Which means the greatest percentage of the producers in this province will not qualify for a tax rebate. I think that is totally ludicrous, Mr. Speaker.

I think everyone in this province puts into and is part of the economic engine of this province, not just the few large hog operations such as Sask Wheat Pool is producing around the province of Saskatchewan. And I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, the only reason it's in there is because of Sask Wheat Pool, not really looking at the farmers and the other individuals who have made a real investment in the province of Saskatchewan.

One more point, Mr. Speaker, and I'll sit down. Highways budget. I believe there were a number of questions in the Assembly today about highways and the problems in our highway system. The minister stood in this Assembly today and said, \$2.5 billion into highways over the next 10 years. Well guess what, Mr. Speaker? That basically brings the highways budget back to what it was before this government took office in 1991. So is that a real improvement in highway expenditures? I don't think so. I don't think so.

And the members talk about no deficit. Well maybe it's time they set priorities. Maybe it's time they . . . maybe, maybe it's time, Mr. Speaker, they forgot about appointing all their NDP cronies to positions like we just saw yesterday — Gordon Nystuen, another NDP long-time cohort, president of STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company). And I'm looking forward to seeing whether or not there's an improvement in how that company operates.

Mr. Speaker, and how many others? I would suggest, as we suggested here, that the province of Saskatchewan would get a greater benefit if Mr. Archer was given the president of SaskPower rather than the current SaskPower president. We'd have possibly a good quarterback, a good football team in this province of Saskatchewan, and everyone would be really feeling great.

You know there are so many other avenues and I just think it's uncanny that the government hasn't been able to come up and think of some of these methods and which way they can . . . where they can spread the lucrative dollars around rather than it just looking within all the time and finding individuals. But I guess time will tell whether they have the ability to really become good business people.

But on the \$2.5 billion, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly time that a real commitment was made to highways. The unfortunate part in that commitment — I'm not sure I really saw any major commitment to twinning of No. 1. The comment was made about twinning of highways. I think it's time that there was a long-term plan looked at, placed before the Assembly and before the people of Saskatchewan, so that we would know that there will be some definite dollars going into redirect . . .

redirected and reconstruction and upgrading of the highway system in this province.

As you well know, Mr. Speaker, it's imperative that we do that as a result of — and the government's aware of it; the Minister of Agriculture is aware of it — the changes in the freight structure, the changes in the way grain is moved and grain and livestock are moved in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that I think you can see from what I've said today, that while we applaud the government in certain areas of the budget, there are other areas that take more scrutiny, take more time to debate. And I look forward to entering into the debate in this . . . on this floor as we enter into the total picture and address line by line, budget speech debates with the different departments and with the different ministers.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly been a pleasure to enter into the debate this afternoon. I'm thankful for our guests that have come up from Minnesota. I trust they find this educational and I wish them well through their Easter break.

And at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'll just take a moment as well to wish all the members a pleasant Easter break as we're entering that season fairly closely and I probably won't have time to speak again. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it really is an honour for me today to enter this debate on the 1997 provincial budget. And I want to begin by thanking my constituents for their continued support, for their patience as we struggled with the difficult situation that we found ourselves in in Saskatchewan over the last years. I really do appreciate their support, their comments, and their input. And I want, certainly, that dialogue with my constituents to continue because for me it is a very positive part of me doing my job.

I want to begin today by telling the Assembly a little bit about what my view and my perspective of this caucus, this government, in fact is. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I recognize my colleagues as a group of committed social democrats who have been successfully dealing with the realities of the 1990s.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as I work on a day-to-day basis with members on this side of the House, it becomes clear why we have been so successful. The reason that we've been successful as a government is because we have been able to establish for ourselves a very clear vision of where we're going to and where we want to be.

(1500)

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, my observation would be as well, that we're the only group in this legislature that believes in using government as a tool, as a vehicle to benefit the lives of all of the people of Saskatchewan, and that government plays

a very positive role in the quest to bring about a more just and a more equitable society.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as well, that my observation is that members on this side of the House are committed to delivering government where all citizens have a voice in the decision-making process, to make people feel good about the future of this province, and to give them a sense of belonging and a sense of opportunity, and to make this government theirs once again.

Mr. Speaker, this caucus, members on this side, truly believe in a sustainable, publicly funded, single-tier health care system, unlike Liberal members on that side of the House. Those are some of the differences, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, members of this caucus believe our children and our youth should have access to the best education system that can be afforded by this province. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we're going to ensure, and this budget is very much reflective that this government is committed to make sure, that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I believe that the most vulnerable in our society should be given a helping hand and that also is addressed in our action plan for children.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I believe that we cannot and we should not ever again allow the people of this province to have to rely on bond holders and bankers to finance our day-to-day operations of government. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that that kind of action is not sustainable and will result in the eventual destruction of programs that I mentioned earlier that we all hold near and dear and that we're all so proud of, like medicare and high quality of public education.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a budget that our government and the people of Saskatchewan truly can be proud of. We have shown the people of Saskatchewan that government can exhibit fiscal integrity. This is the fourth consecutive balanced budget this government has produced. We have been able to significantly reduce the province's debt as a percentage of gross domestic product. That has been reduced from what was 70 per cent to now in the neighbourhood of 49 per cent, and that debt load will continue to be cut as we progress through our budgets in the future.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, this is good news for Saskatchewan. It's good news that we're able to reduce this debt. It's good news for investors. It's good news for the people who borrow us money because it ensures that our risk is a lot lower and hopefully we can see a credit upgrade as a result of that, Mr. Speaker. And it's good news because it allows us to deliver some much-needed tax relief and to enhance spending, as we have done in this budget with respect to the most needy in our province, with respect to health care, and with respect to education.

Mr. Speaker, this budget emphasizes the value of public input in the decision-making process as I indicated earlier, and we recognize the need to have community involved as we put

together a response with respect to our budget.

Mr. Speaker, we listened to the needs that people had addressed and I think, Mr. Speaker, the budget clearly outlines that this is a government that understands the people of Saskatchewan and we have listened to their concerns.

Well earlier, Mr. Speaker, I indicated that I believe that this is the only political party in this legislature with a vision. And I said that I believe that we are the only party that has a good understanding of where this province has come from, where our political movement has come from, and where we want to be in the future.

I want to just briefly turn to where we have come from, and I'm not going to dwell on . . . and I'm going to spare you a recounting of the mess that the Tories left us in. Instead, I want to be able to talk about what we intend to do in the future with the financial resources that the people of Saskatchewan have allowed for us.

I want to start by talking about tax relief. From the beginning of this mandate in 1991 we have introduced, albeit modest, we have introduced tax . . . very significant tax reductions. They have been targeted, Mr. Speaker, and we recognize that.

We have introduced the child tax reduction for low income families. That's been increased by 10 per cent. Small business corporate income tax has been reduced. We have introduced tax credits for manufacturing and processing that have created jobs in this province. We've reduced the fuel tax on aviation fuel. We've reduced the personal income tax of up to \$300 a family for 6,000 of the lowest income earning families in this province. And finally, Mr. Speaker, finally we have been able to deal with our provincial sales tax and introduce a 2 per cent decrease in this budget.

And I would like to remind members opposite that a Saskatchewan family in this province pays less in provincial sales tax in 1997 than families in Alberta pay in health care premiums. And I think it's important to remind in particular the Tory parties who hold Ralph Klein's administration up as a flagship and a model for government. This is a government that has done things differently, Mr. Speaker. We have initiated government the Saskatchewan way — with compassion, working with people. And I think that it speaks a lot for the people of Saskatchewan in terms of the kinds of government they elect, frankly.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, our government is and has always been committed to a universal health care system even in our deepest and darkest financial times. We embarked on an ambitious and a very badly needed reform of health care in Saskatchewan, but we have been able to maintain the principles of medicare that were established in this province so many years ago by people who think as we do on this side — that that is one of the flagships and the hallmarks that Saskatchewan has been able to offer the people of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I find it unfortunate that members of the opposition have to continue to be resorting to scare tactics with respect to health care. I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that they would have learned from Ross Thatcher's history — the defender of medicare that he was — that the people of Saskatchewan trust the New Democrat government with health care in their hands. And I think the future will show, as we lead the people of Canada into a reformed health care system, that we will again be the flagship in Canada with respect to medicare.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I really wish the Liberals would stop wasting their energies on half-truths and join with us in demanding that their federal counterparts in Ottawa develop the same kind of an approach to health care as the Government of Saskatchewan has done under the member from Riversdale.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it was a proud day and it was a very happy day, after more than a decade, this government was finally able to deliver a balanced budget. Shortly thereafter though we faced the challenge — cut-backs from the federal Liberals with respect to health care and education and social programs. But we saw it through, Mr. Speaker. We were forced to make some tough decisions, and in the end one of the decisions we made was to back-fill every single dollar that the Chrétien Liberal government ripped out of the pockets of the people of this province in health care and education and social services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say the difference between members on this side of the House and this government and other jurisdictions is that we are the only administration in Canada who saw fit to do that. Mr. Speaker, why did we do that? I'll tell you why. Because we believe very strongly in the value of the programs that these cuts targeted.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it irritates me no end when I see the Liberal opposition, having said absolutely nothing and defending the cuts of their counterparts in Ottawa, stand up and criticize this government for not putting enough money into health care and not putting enough money into social services and not putting enough money into education.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to each and every one of them, shame on you, shame on you. Because this is the most positive and forward-looking budget that's been introduced in this legislature since 1982 and you know it; and if you don't, you should.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the phrase that was used throughout the throne speech and the theme of the throne speech was investing in people. And how did we do that, Mr. Speaker? We've cut the provincial sales tax, as I've indicated. We've increased spending on health and education. And we've

introduced programs to address child poverty. We've put a massive amount of money committed over a long-term period to our infrastructure on highways. I want to say all of this, Mr. Speaker, represents a very major and a very positive investment in the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's a little bit of difference here in terms of what this administration does and others have been known to do — in particular, Liberals. And watch in the upcoming weeks as the federal Liberals gear up for their election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very positive budget. Many people said, oh my goodness, it almost looks like an election budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, this isn't a Liberal government; this is a New Democrat government and we were striving and working for the day when we could offer some tax relief and some enhanced spending to the people of this province after them having suffered for so many years because of right-wing mismanagement perpetrated by members on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I want to say that these investments in Saskatchewan people are stable and they are sustainable and they're here for the long haul.

Mr. Speaker, I've mentioned the importance of sustainability in my statement, and why do I place an emphasis on this concept? I want to tell you. I do so because I want these investments and the fiscal freedom that we fought so hard for to be here for my children and your children and future generations of this province. When you get down to it, this budget isn't really so much about today; this budget is about tomorrow and it's about the future of the citizens of this province — our young people and generations yet to come. That's who we govern for. That's why we were charged to put the fiscal house in order, of this province.

And we've done that, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say, not so much for us, for our generation. We've had it very good frankly, here in Saskatchewan, people of my age. I'm interested and I'm concerned in the direction that I want to see this government take is for the young people of Saskatchewan and for their children, because, Mr. Speaker, that's what this government is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I've spoken at length about who I believe we are — members on this side of the House — what we stand for and where we come from. And I'd like to if I could, Mr. Speaker, comment on the members opposite — who they are and what, if anything, they stand for.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday I was in this House and I was listening with interest to the member from Melville and his response to the budget. And what I found really, really telling and really, really interesting was what he chose to use in his speech.

Mr. Speaker, what the member from Melville chose to use in his speech was not speak to the budget, what the budget delivered, and the hope that it delivered to the people of Saskatchewan. He chose to attack the youngest member in this legislature, a man who has not yet reached the age of 30 years old but who had the courage to stand up for his convictions and seek election in one of the most difficult New Democrat seats in this province. That's the character of the member from Melville, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, in his comments he indicated that it was almost a shameful thing that this young man should join us in the legislature, a young fellow with a lack of experience. Well I want to tell you something, I have worked very closely with that member for the past years and I have a very, very good understanding, unlike the member from Melville, of who he is and where he intends to take this province in the time that he spends in his political life, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say that he knows who he is, unlike that member, who was defeated for a Reform Party nomination and who now sits in this House purporting to be a Liberal. Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina South knows who he is and he knows what he stands for, unlike that member, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the attitude, the attitude of the member from Melville is a real good illustration of why the Liberal Party is not now fit to govern this province and will never be fit to govern this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Now, Mr. Speaker, this Reformer turned Liberal — part of an organization, a political bunch of wannabes, Mr. Speaker, in this legislature plotting with the member from Wood River for the day of the knives when they could cut the heart out of the member from Greystone, the then leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker. That's what Liberals are about.

That's what this opposition is about, Mr. Speaker. This is a ragtag group of individuals who have banded together to form what they believe is a political movement, with no ideology, Mr. Speaker, no integrity, Mr. Speaker, and no direction. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why they will sit on the opposition side of this House for a long, long time to come, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I was listening as well to the member from Melfort-Tisdale, a known supporter of the Conservative administration of the 1980s in his area. And then he left the Tories when they fell out of favour, so deservedly, and he emerges on the hustings as a Liberal.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget his political heritage — Liberal, Tory, same old story. It never changes, Mr. Speaker. They move from that corner of the opposition to that corner of the opposition. And what do you call them? Liberals or Tories or Reformers, Mr. Speaker? They're all the same; they're no different.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I listened as well with interest to the speech of the member from Wood River. Now this is a man of integrity. This is a textbook example, Mr. Speaker, of political opportunism. I tell you, you pull out Webster's dictionary and you look up that phrase in the dictionary and you'll see a picture of his face right beside the words, Mr. Speaker. That's what that's all about.

He couldn't handle the tough decisions that had to be made when we were trying to put our feet back on the ground on this side, Mr. Speaker. He couldn't handle making the tough choices. And he knew because of that he'd be a perpetual back-bencher on this side of this House and that's why he left, Mr. Speaker. He thought the pastures were greener on the other side of the House, and he sits in the corner isolated from his colleagues, Mr. Speaker. That's what that opposition is all about.

And, Mr. Speaker, why do I say this about members on the opposition side? Well let me ask some questions, and I could actually give some answers. What's their position on gaming? I don't know. Mr. Speaker, what's their position on health care? Mr. Speaker, I don't know. But you know what the saddest part of this, Mr. Speaker, is? That they don't know. That's the sad part of this; they don't know.

Mr. Speaker, governing is not an easy chore, and it's about making decisions and it's about making difficult decisions and it's about making the right decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close my remarks; many of my colleagues have more to say on this. But I want to remind the people of Saskatchewan what the Leader of this Liberal Party is about.

The good doctor is in favour of two-tier health care and he's in favour of harmonization. I tell you what he's in favour of, destroying medicare, Mr. Speaker, and increasing taxes in this province. And I can see why that has to be, because every day in here they're talking about increasing expenditures on this and increasing expenditures on that. Mr. Speaker, we worked long and hard to put a balanced, reasoned approach to this budget.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, in my travels throughout this province in the last short while, I can say to members in the opposition that this has been a very, very positively received budget. And I know why, Mr. Speaker, because there is trust in this government. There is trust that this government will continue to manage, that we will continue to govern with compassion and that we will continue to listen to the people of this province in doing so.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by capsulating what this

government has done. We've delivered four consecutive balanced budgets and there's more to follow. We've increased expenditures to enhance the quality of life for our friends and our neighbours, for the people of Saskatchewan. We've been able to include a measure of tax relief for Saskatchewan people and, Mr. Speaker, we've been able to do all of this maintaining the fiscal integrity of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by thanking each and every one of my caucus colleagues. And I want to say to you all that this has been the finest group of men and women that I've had the opportunity to work with and you should all be proud of yourselves. You should all be proud of having the courage to do what in this province needs to be done. And I think you can go home to your constituents with a high head and you can do that because you've done the right things.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just close and say thank you to the Premier of this province for his leadership. And I want to say to all members of the House that I would like to just do a short quote from something that the Premier of this province is often heard to say: "Let's continue to work to make Saskatchewan the greatest province in the greatest country in the world in which to live."

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 1997 budget has been presented to the people of this province and I'm really delighted to enter into the debate on behalf of the people of Kelvington-Wadena constituency.

During the throne speech debate I neglected to welcome the new viewers in our community that are watching the legislative channel. I trust they will feel more involved in the workings of the provincial government and they'll continue to keep me informed with their comments and concerns as the weeks go on.

Mr. Speaker, life has carried on much the same as it did prior to the presentation of the 1997 budget, even though the hype and the fanfare of that much-touted day would have led us to believe we were entering into a new type of euphoria. People always wait with much anticipation to find out how the government is going to spend their money. This of course isn't a big change in the way the universe usually unfolds in Saskatchewan, at least for the last 90 years. Government decides how to spend our money and then asks our permission in four or five years when another election is called. This year is no different. It's no better, but perhaps it was a little worse.

Mr. Speaker, at first glance this appeared to be a very positive budget. Of course, any politically astute person would have realized this would be a good news year. The government and the Crowns handled more money than this province has ever seen.

We all realize that this government, by the very fact that politics is the backbone of the institution, would have preferred

to wait until at least next year to present a good news budget. It is normally expected closer to an election year. But the magnitude of the fortunes that fell this year decreed that there must be some positive breaks for the people in Saskatchewan. And once people have had one good news budget, it will have to happen again next year and the next year and the next year. And my advice to the Finance minister is, deal with it.

Of course the excitement in the budget centred around the decrease in one of the taxes that were plaguing the people of this province — the much-hated provincial sales tax. Sales tax rebate on building materials for livestock and horticultural activities and the extension of the manufacturing and processing tax credit to include used equipment is definitely a plus.

The increase in funding to the Women's Secretariat, if it is described as it was in the public information, is exciting and innovative. And I would like to congratulate the minister involved and support her efforts in bringing the very real problems of women to the forefront. I also welcome the news that the government will spend \$120,000 on education for fetal alcohol syndrome.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I go further into the budget address I would like to thank the member from Regina Victoria for his reply to the throne speech ... or the budget speech. That member obviously spent an enormous amount of time going through *Hansard* reviewing speeches made by the Liberals to write his own reply. His unsuccessful attempt at humour, as opposed to his speech ... substance or originality is of course one way of representing people. Mr. Speaker, the people in my constituency expect that their ideas and their concerns and their problems be brought to the attention of government. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, they don't consider their problems humorous.

Mr. Speaker, much of my time as well as the time of my colleagues is spent working for people who live in the constituencies of the members opposite. The people who do not get the help they need from this government are forced to call on the opposition. My colleagues and I don't have time to go through *Hansard* to find substance for a speech and we don't have time to talk about the birds or the gospel according to Mandryk. This jargon is too trivial compared to the problems of the real people of this province.

But the caustic remarks of the members opposite only emphasizes their arrogance and the fact that this government is totally out of touch with the people. It also underlines the fact that the people's voices are only being heard by the members on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, including the Finance minister, have heard the reaction to the budget not only from the Liberals but also the media and the citizens of this province. By nature and by necessity the people from my constituency, the constituency of Kelvington-Wadena, consider repetition redundant. And we, unlike the members opposite, abhor hearing the same thing repeated over and over and over again. Things like it's the federal government's fault; it's because of

offloading from the federal government. It may work, Mr. Speaker, but it doesn't give any validity to the statement and we don't like to pay the game.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make one point abundantly clear. No one, absolutely no one, was fooled by the blatantly obvious fact that the manner in which the budget address as presented by the Finance minister was an attempt to bolster the chances of the NDP candidates in the upcoming federal election.

In fact every speech, every answer to every question the people of this province have heard by this NDP government since session began, was used as an opportunity to slam the federal Liberals. The fact that the Leader of the federal NDP Party sat in our Assembly the first day of session was the first clue. The rhetoric we heard every day was the second clue. And the address around the budget was really the icing on the cake.

Mr. Speaker, I really don't mind if the members want to spend their whole time slamming the federal Liberals, our federal caucus members, if that's what you want to refer to them as.

You've probably heard the saying, you can pick your friends but you can't pick your relatives. Well our federal cousins are just relatives. But the people of this province who have to listen to your rhetoric every day must get tired of your canned responses. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are too wise to fall for this garbage two years in a row.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — If, and I underline if, one could believe in a socialist philosophy, and realizing that all is fair in love, war, and politics, I can understand them trying to use this tactic. Especially considering the status of the present NDP federal party, the reality of their chances in the next election, and realistically, their ability to govern a nation as diverse as that of Canada.

Just so you know why you're constantly repeating the phrase, Liberals are the bad guys, I keep remembering the phrase from *Hamlet* that says: me thinks the members protesteth too much. Your rhetoric is wearing thin and it's getting on everyone's nerves.

Mr. Speaker, this budget proved to me that this government's understanding of the business environment and the need for change in that environment is still non-existent. The reduction of the PST by 2 per cent resulted in another reduction — that of government revenue in the amount of nearly \$200 million. Propaganda sent out at the time of the budget talked about its moves as an attempt to create jobs.

But, Mr. Speaker, reducing the PST is just one-sided. It's a totally disjointed measure that is totally unconnected to anything else in this budget. The member from Regina Victoria summed up the government's real understanding of the reduction when he said:

... we hope that the tax cuts will ... create jobs. We hope that the tax cut will ... be good for (the) economic

activity. But our major priority is to reduce the tax burden ...

What's that got to do with the job creation that you're talking about? You don't understand it. The two of them go hand in hand.

The rationalization underlines the fact that this government has no understanding of what business means when they talk about an environment. Mr. Speaker, I have no confidence that this government knows why the reduction is important at all or why this is only one step that, without an overall plan and without faith in the people in this province, will never result ... never produce the results you need. In fact one only has to ask if the reduction is sustainable, if the government is only willing to float one trial balloon to see if business can succeed without government.

Mr. Speaker, there was one other tangible outcome from this budget. The slush fund that this government uses to kite money back and forth between general revenues and the Liquor and Gaming fund now has its own official name. It's now called the stabilization fund. We're not sure if its purpose is to stabilize the economy or to stabilize the government, but by acknowledging that the government has this kiting fund is a first step.

I think we can relate this government's gambling problem to other addictions. Recognizing the problem and openly admitting it is cleansing for your soul.

(1530)

Mr. Speaker, maintaining the stabilization fund is actually this government's insurance policy on the risk created by giving people control of their dollars. This government could choose to put the \$150 million they now have in the stabilization fund into the province to ensure that schools would remain open or that the health services are restored or even that our highway would be rescued from its state of disrepair.

But that would take some understanding of the link between creating a positive business environment and an environment for growth. And this government can't seem to make a connection.

I believe that the stabilization fund proves the PST reduction is a disjointed measure business people have come to expect from this socialist government. The NDP government has given a small reward to the citizens after the beatings of the past five years.

The stabilization fund is sort of like leaving your estate to your children but not allowing them to use it until you've retired yourself. No opportunity to use it, no belief they have any ability to use it correctly, so they'll just let it lay there.

This is really an age-old socialist trick. Use the Crowns to bleed the people, and then use their existence to prove that socialism works.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the government to find me one person who's so patriotic that they prefer that Saskatchewan owns a hundred per cent of the Crowns instead of keeping their hospitals open or their schools open. Mr. Speaker, the fact the Crowns are growing is proof that more money is being sucked out of the taxpayers than is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, when we compare our province to either Alberta or Manitoba, we always end up with the short end of the stick. One only has to compare the political history of our provinces to understand why Saskatchewan has stagnated for the last 50 years while our neighbouring provinces have continued to achieve their potential.

I ask you how many years has a socialist government ruled in Saskatchewan in the last 50 years, and how many years have they ruled in Alberta and Manitoba? This is not a coincidence. Saskatchewan has as many if not more natural resources than our neighbouring provinces.

Our talented and entrepreneurial people have been making their marks all over the world. But our trouble is that a socialist government has an inability to attract or even keep these people at home.

Mr. Speaker, targeted tax relief means that growth is restricted — restricted to the areas that this government wants to see it grow in. A small amount of relief means that people have a half a chance to make their mortgage payments. It doesn't mean long-term wealth creation. It doesn't mean business start-ups. It just means less people will go bankrupt.

We have targeted relief in this budget. We have the government realizing that they want to help pigs and potatoes. And that's good. I think that we should have a hog industry and I think there's lots of opportunity within the potato industry for growth.

But why should the government decide who is going to be the winner and who's going to be the loser in this province?

Mr. Speaker, the events following this budget provide us some understanding of why the third party nearly decimated the province in the '80s and proved to me that the current PC Party is totally incapable of ever being an alternative government in this province again. The endorsement of the budget by the Leader of the Third Party, to the point of supporting this left-wing, self-serving document had to be done to save face.

But how could a conservative, right-wing party like the PCs stoop to socialist ideology? The PST reduction was the only solid proposal of the PCs this session. Hopefully they don't believe that this one simple proposal will make life wonderful in Saskatchewan. Perhaps the political belief that to have one uncomplicated message to the electorate — the PST reduction — just backfired on the third party.

Whatever the answer, the NDP government should be happy. There are only 11 of us left now to hold their feet to the fire. It's a great day for the government and a black day for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the saddest thing about this budget was the final insult given to rural Saskatchewan. The cut, or shall I call it the downloading and the offloading, from the province onto the municipalities makes the federal government look like an amateur at the game. The cuts will force local governments to cut services and to cut programs. The savings realized by individuals as the result of the PST reduction will pale in comparison with the increase in property taxes because of your choice in budgetary spending.

Boards that were waiting to hear if the budget would breathe back life into the schools now realize they don't have a future. Small hospitals watch as the larger centres receive the biggest increases to their budget. This in turn means that services will only be available in designated locations picked by this government.

And with the migration fundings, these hospitals are in a catch-22. You need the services to bring the people. The fewer the services, the less money. The less money, the fewer services, and so on and so on until there will be nothing left of our district health boards in the rural areas.

The funding through the infrastructure program can only be garnered if municipalities have the matching funding available. With the cut-backs, many will have difficulty finding their share, and as a result, they may be unable to access government funds.

Mr. Speaker, I think of the localities out in rural Saskatchewan that are suffering because of this government. The Big River nursery that's been in business for over 30 years is losing a hundred jobs. We have schools in Weekes. If that school closes, Mr. Speaker, there's going to be a 70-minute bus ride, one way, for those students to go to school.

What about . . . between Porcupine and Kindersley and Hudson Bay there are 75 miles. Mr. Speaker, in Annaheim and Englefeld, the towns that are actually thriving with . . . because of industry, they're having problems because they can't keep their schools open. We can't attract young people to come to a town to work in a job if there's no schools there. They believe in their family. They want to keep their families together, and if we don't have a school system they can't come. They'll be forced to live in a bigger centre and drive out to rural Saskatchewan if it's still there.

Mr. Speaker, the education dollars that were flaunted in this budget did little more than just cover the increase that was given to our teachers. We all know that teachers deserve every penny they get, but they weren't given any extra money.

The highways' dollars is \$2.5 million a year. It doesn't sound near as great as saying 2.5 billion in 10 years. The reality is it's still only two hundred point five a year. Do you know how much it costs to build 1 mile of highway? The Minister of Highways knows — \$1 million. So that means we could have 200 miles built in a year. That's not a lot. In the meantime we have to maintain the roads.

Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that in the budget, SOCO

(Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) was given an extra million dollars for administration. Now that is really frustrating considering they've only dealt with 15 applications in the last three years, and is continuing to give them over \$5 million a year to administer it. Maybe that's the job creation they're talking about — keeping people going in places like SOCO.

I was amazed to hear the government talk about JobStart and Future Skills when that's a program that is funded 50 per cent by the federal government. There's a 50/50 agreement with each government running up \$1.3 million over three years. The Canada-Saskatchewan Agreement on Strategic Initiatives, both governments will contribute up to \$13 million over three years. But there's nothing saying about what the federal government has done.

Mr. Speaker, PAWBED (Partnership Agreement on Water Based Economic Development) has been given \$20 million by the provincial government, but at the same time there was \$20 million put in by the federal government.

PARD (Partnership Agreement on Rural Development) was getting \$7.5 million by the federal government and by the provincial government.

And, Mr. Speaker, the cooperatives initiative that we heard about in the budget is interesting, but I'm not sure if the new generation co-ops that will be created or are looked at in this government by this budget is what people are expecting. It's not the type of co-ops we see on Main Street, Watson or Spalding. It's a type of cooperative like Sask Wheat Pool and I think maybe it's a little misleading to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, there's obviously no desire by this government to save rural Saskatchewan. And colleagues from across the floor, I'm willing to predict, just as I did the elimination of the PST from livestock equipment, that your government will go down in history being the one who turned out the lights when the last person left rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Any government who tries to pass a budget that will in effect ruin my constituency and ruin the people — the lives in it — will never garner my support or the support of the people in my area. And for that reason I will not support this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am indeed proud and honoured to address and support the 1997 budget.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at my own experiences — being born and raised in northern Saskatchewan, and having done the lifestyle living on the trap-line, doing fishing and also moving forward, doing work in the tourism industry, and then later on going to school, and later on getting into teaching, and having that experience from northern Saskatchewan — Mr. Speaker, when I look at that experience, I feel a lot of great privilege and

honour to be in this House.

When I look at it, I see that in many cases when we were born and raised in Cumberland, we were trying to, you know, fight for jobs at the mines and trying to fight for jobs in the forestry, and trying to look and try and get an education and be important contributors to our community in Cumberland. And my speech today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to look at the North and the impact of the budget, you know, as it relates to the North.

I'm indeed very proud to be part of the government as a member from our Premier, the member from Riversdale. I know that in many cases his tremendous leadership is part and parcel of the team approach that we take as members on this side of the House in regards to governing this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also say a bit of thanks to a team that I was watching yesterday in curling. I know that, you know, the member from Athabasca will be attending the aboriginal curling championships this weekend, and that yesterday we were very privileged to have the send-off to the team from Saskatchewan who are the Canadian champions. And I would like to, you know, thank and congratulate Sandra Schmirler and Jan Betker, Joan McCusker, and Marcia Gudereit.

I know that as I watched them through the years, not only have they displayed the tremendous and awesome skill in curling, I know that in many cases they had the dynamic, you know, the exuberance on ice. And in many cases when we were talking about public relations, they are indeed leaders in public relations, not only in representing our province but representing our country. I know that they will be great ambassadors, you know, as they play the game at the international level. And being former world champions, I know that they will do us great honour.

And I would like to thank them as well for . . . in their busy schedule they have taken their time out to visit northern Saskatchewan. They have come to Cumberland House, you know, for an event there. And I knew that through their busy schedule it was a tremendous honour for us to have them at our community in Cumberland House. Because in many cases you see international celebrities, and in many cases them coming down to the community level stands in good stead, you know, for themselves as individuals and as a team. And I think I would like to thank them for that.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to the budget, I think this budget is not only one of an investment in people and the investment on the communities, it is also one of bridging the gap in northern Saskatchewan. When I look at the history of northern Saskatchewan I first of all wanted to make a little bit of comment in regards to the member from North Battleford. Because the last time I did the throne speech he hadn't said a word about northern Saskatchewan, and I must say that he did say one or two sentences the other day.

(1545)

When I listened very carefully to whether or not he would speak about the North, he told me . . . he said in this House that indeed he was in the North. And as he blurted out to try and get a grasp back to exactly what he was doing in the North, he blurted out that he flew through the North. So while we do know one thing, he did speak one word about the North and that we know that he did fly through the North, maybe one of these days he'll take a little bit of time to visit the North and, you know, drive around and meet with the people and see exactly our tremendous lifestyle, see our self-determination from the North, see the strong stands we get, and see the partnerships that this government is building in regards to the people of the North.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — When I look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was looking at the history of northern Saskatchewan, and I was looking at the overall vision of the people of northern Saskatchewan as it related to northern development, as it related to them taking care of their children and looking into the future.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of the people have been stating very clearly that they wanted to have control over their own lives. They wanted to have a sense of self-determination in regards to the major aspects of development, whether it was in the economy or whether it was in the field of education or in the field of municipal government.

When we look at the history of northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very clear that it was not the Liberals or the Conservatives that made this essence, this pride, this northern spirit come true. That's always been the NDP government.

When you look at the history during the Thatcher years, when you look at the Thatcher years, Mr. Speaker, when you look at northern Saskatchewan, the only thing that they did was try and establish the small-level type of Indian Affairs control. They had this Indian Affairs colonial mentality and the Thatcher government tried to have a mini Indian Affairs in this province.

But it never worked and people disregarded it over the years and many of the chiefs spoke against it because they said, we had enough problems with the Indian Affairs in Ottawa that to have a provincial Indians Affairs in this province, so when the NDP government came in in 1971, we threw that out.

On the case of northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we also looked at the aspect of control. From a governmental sense, during the Liberal years, it was managed through DNR, the Department of Natural Resources. I remember that most of the programing in northern Saskatchewan was not economic development during the Liberal years; it was basically social services. So when we were looking at governmental control and people's control, they were done through one department controlled from Regina and that indeed it was mainly social services programs that they did move on in northern Saskatchewan.

When the NDP government came in in 1971 we moved in on the different levels of control. The first level was, what the people wanted was education for their children. They wanted educational control. So when you looked at the legislation, what the DNS (Department of Northern Saskatchewan) did was moved in on educational control in northern Saskatchewan.

And we had the control from Ile-a-la-Crosse, the member from Athabasca's own community. They had the first elected board from that area in regards during NDP times. The Northern Lakes School Division, the same thing — the first elected large-scale board in northern Saskatchewan. Northern School Board as it was called at that time was the first elected controlled board of that magnitude in northern Saskatchewan.

I think that in many cases, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan during the '70s also recognized the control. Three community colleges were established in northern Saskatchewan, one on the east side, one in the central side, and one in the west side. And these were controlled by the people of northern Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I might add that in regard to municipalities and elected people having a say in control, the first phase of development on municipalities were done with the northern municipal council. And in that sense it was very important to recognize that the vision of northern control was taking effect during NDP years.

I might say that when you look across Canada, when these Liberals from across the floor are talking against health boards, and they call the elected health boards puppet boards, what in the northern Saskatchewan people are saying is this — they want control, they want to have control. They don't want somebody that is hand-picked from Melenchuk's department and his research money from down South. They don't want him to hand-pick who it is that should sit on the board. They want to elect those people themselves over the long run, as we move into the transition to an elected board in the future.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, in many cases again we're moving control from education, municipalities, and now the field of health. When you look at it, Mr. Speaker, the majority of the monies that goes into northern Saskatchewan will be under the control of people from northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I might add that the Tories were mentioning something about the North. And I've always remembered this. When I was a member of the opposition, when the Tories were around, as far as northern Saskatchewan, they took back control; they centralized everything like the Liberals did. Like I said, Liberals and Tories always work the same way. They moved . . . they took away DNS, destroyed the controls in the North, moved them all back to Regina.

It's interesting when I read, their highways at that time they said that the North was full of beautiful lakes and rivers, but no people. That was the attitude of the Tories. And I might say that might be the attitude of the member from North Battleford. I'm not too sure yet. We'll see what he says, because all that he's done so far is say that he flew through northern Saskatchewan like the Tories used to do during the '80s. So when we were

looking at it, Mr. Speaker, I think that we have to look at the specifics and the details as well.

On the health side, you're looking at the fact that although the Liberals cut our budget in the province of Saskatchewan, the transfer payments of \$200 million and 90 million in the health area, we have been in the past two years able to replace \$40 million last year, of which 600,000 went into northern Saskatchewan. When I looked at it, Mr. Speaker, this year not only did we put \$57 million in the health budget after the \$200 million cuts from the feds, but we had increased also expenditures in the North.

In the North in the health side we will get a 7.3 per cent increase on the operations of the new boards. Also when you look at it, Mr. Speaker, we will have help for physician services, a million dollars.

The member from Athabasca is over there and I know on the west side they will be getting three more people who will be working as public health nurses and also on the mental health services as well. And these are important developments in those areas because, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is committed to the people of the North and also is very, very, very considerate in regards to the health levels and the development of that sphere in the North.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, we also look at the capital side. You look at Liberal or Tory governments anywhere, you don't see development in that capacity. When you look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had approximately \$12 million in regards to the health centre in La Ronge. And in many cases a lot of the La Ronge people had put in a million dollars' worth, over a million dollars' worth of money that they were able to save up at the community level to put in there as well. We had people contributing from the local level.

And also this year, Mr. Speaker, you'll be very pleased to know that we've got a \$10.8 million facility going into the Athabasca region.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — A lot of those Athabasca members say nothing about the fact that . . . In regards to Lake Athabasca region, maybe that member from North Battleford will finally go and land in Stony Rapids where we improved the airport in Stony Rapids last year, so that maybe he could land over there and go and visit the new health centre in Stony Rapids. They never say one word about the new \$10.8 million health centre that will go into Stony Rapids.

All they keep saying is, oh what about those ATCO trailers in La Loche. I'll tell you one thing about La Loche, Mr. Speaker. As any government when you look at it, it will not be a Liberal government. The majority of the people in La Loche are treaty Indian people, Mr. Speaker.

What is the federal government doing in regards to the health of the treaty Indian people where they have the treaty right to health? Not very much, Mr. Speaker. If they were going to be

smart, Mr. Speaker, they would stand up in the House and get the federal Liberal government to cost-share a facility to improve the level of the facility development in La Loche.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you this one thing. I think that in the long run it'll be an NDP government that'll improve the facilities in La Loche and never a Liberal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I think I always hit a little bit of a nerve with the people when I speak the truth over here. When we look at the educational level and we see that \$22 million expenditures provincially, a lot of the people ask me, what about the North?

Again, Mr. Speaker, we did a lot of community college development. They elected boards in northern Saskatchewan in education. We have also seen the tremendous improvement of the Northlands board and the development thereof. I was involved in teacher education over 20 years ago in NORTEP (northern teacher education program). A lot of people are proud of the teacher education NORTEP program that we do have in the North. About 200 people have graduated with teaching certificates from over there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the educational development we also had a multi-party training program — \$10 million committed. And when you look at it, Mr. Speaker, we've had over 300 people in mining from that particular program alone. In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've had 1,000 . . . last year alone, 1,750 people in post-secondary education.

It's a far cry from the Liberal years, Mr. Speaker. When the Liberals were in power when I went to university, I was the only one from northern Saskatchewan going to university. That was Liberal times.

When I look at the number of people, there were just a handful of people going to the technical institutes. Now these are not only counting that . . . these are people . . . there's 1,750 people are in northern Saskatchewan getting trained in the North. Mr. Speaker, that's not counting the people that are taking training in many parts of the province of Saskatchewan and elsewhere in the country.

So when you're looking at it, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals over there and the member from North Battleford should be saying, I'm proud of those young people, I'm proud of them standing up, getting babysitters, and sitting down and getting a good education so that in the long run they put food on the table for their children. That is what I'm proud of. That is the northern pride that I speak about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, when you look at the question of social reform, we also look at this issue in these terms. In many cases the Liberals will try gimmicks here and there — whether it's a \$4 gimmick or something like that. Well

we don't have a \$4 gimmick, Mr. Speaker, what we have is commitment. We had \$12 million last year in a budget on the child action program to help children and to help youth in the province. Now we have \$25 million, Mr. Speaker. That is over double the amount that was there.

Now the member from North Battleford is saying something again. I would say this much: with all the speeches he makes about social conscience — and the same with the member from Athabasca — you look at the devastating cut of the federal government, \$7 billion all across Canada, \$200 million in Saskatchewan alone. They said they would never touch medicare, but they smashed about \$90 million away from the province just on health alone.

So, Mr. Speaker, they may talk about social conscience and social justice and they may go in the press on their \$4-a-day breakfast or whatever it was, but I'll tell you something. The commitment or money has to go down to the people at the local level. And that is exactly what this NDP government is doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, on the question of . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce a very special guest that's visiting the Assembly today and ask that we all welcome the mayor of my home community and the guy that took charge of the mess I left behind, Mr. Max Morin of Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Leave granted.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and to the members of the Assembly, I would too like to welcome Mr. Morin here today. Max and I served for many years together on the Provincial Health Board and continue to share ideas and thoughts about health care in this province. And I'd ask you all, on my behalf, to welcome him as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take my place as well to welcome Max Morin, the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Max has been very instrumental in working with the new north group in northern Saskatchewan, bringing

together all the other mayors and working as a team in northern Saskatchewan to create a new vision for northern development in the many areas of development, from economic and social development, education, and so on. So we're very pleased to have Max Morin here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1600)

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's very important to recognize just one thing, and I would like to go back a bit on the health side on the member from Arm River.

I know that in this case we need to be able to look at the importance of statements that the members from opposite have been saying about puppet . . . you know, puppet elected boards. I think they ought to take those words back. I think that the people from northern Saskatchewan, once they take control of the health in their area, should be given the chance to control that health. When they do their elections, they're the ones that should be standing up and saying yes, we are the ones controlling this health — not hand-picked selections from Melenchuk or whoever will be the next Liberal leader.

When I look at economics, I look at it this way, Mr. Deputy Speaker: 1,000 jobs for the very first time in the history of northern Saskatchewan. We have 1,000 jobs in the area of mining for Northerners. That is now just over 50 per cent of the people who are employed.

When I look at the level of contracts, we had about \$20 million worth of contracts. The northern contractors now have over \$120 million worth of contracts. It is a day of tremendous development, not only for the entrepreneurial skills of northern Saskatchewan and northern businesses, but it is also a very important development on the people taking jobs and taking their place in the many areas of northern development jobs taking place in the apprenticeable trades, whether they want to be electricians or mechanics, and there's about 80 of them already in those positions — 121 people in the technical trades, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well as approximately 40 of them in supervisory positions and doing a lot of the important works.

I just visited in McLean Lake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I saw over there the Dene people from the Athabasca region. I saw Jim Laban; I saw Sandra MacDonald; I saw Lena May Siegertz — these people were running programs of trading people within the mines and moving them forward in the various jobs right in that mine.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are exciting developments being part of NORTEP program. I see now the Athabasca people, the Dene people, taking their place in regards to running training

programs within the mining sector. It was a proud moment for me when I visited them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in about the past week and a half.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do the development on Northern Development Board and also the environmental quality committees. We spend about a quarter of a million on environmental quality committees, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We involve all the communities in northern Saskatchewan. Our only hope is that the Liberal government would put even a penny to help us out on those environmental quality committees.

If we had another quarter of a million from the federal government, we could do research to help out the communities in regards to what they want to do in regards to some of the issues that they're dealing with as they are doing monitoring of mining development in the North.

So I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are important ideas that I picked up from a lot of the people as I travelled through the North this past week. They also said this: we have about a four and a half million dollar program in a northern development fund. They said that it's helping a lot of our entrepreneurs in the North. But they also said, maybe the federal government, it's their election time, maybe they should match our funds.

Maybe if they put up four and a half million, we would have \$9 million in regards to northern development, and putting money with the northern entrepreneurs so that they can take their place, not only in the field of mining, but forestry, tourism, wild rice, services at the community level. Those are the types of things that are going to be important in regards to building a new North, a new sense of pride, of self-determination, as we challenge and deal with the issues of the 1990s, but as we move on into the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, in the final few comments, I would like to say this much. Some of them, some, when we met with the new North, they said, let's get some sewer and water. The federal government we heard is getting out of sewer and water; they're getting out of housing. Will the province make a commitment, a lot of people were asking me? Well in this budget I was proud to say yes, we made that commitment.

We're putting \$2 million in sewer and water in northern Saskatchewan, \$3 million in housing. Also on the infrastructure program, there'll be approximately 2 to \$3 million there as well. So we're looking at 7 to \$8 million in regards, not only to needed services in the province, in northern Saskatchewan, but also as part of the job creation activities at the local level. Because I know a lot of those people have the feeling of self-determination, putting part of the sweat equity and being part of the building of their communities.

Mr. Speaker, as well I would like to say this last thing. On roads — we'll be also doing important developments on Turnor

Lake, the west side, improvements on roads. We'll also be doing \$5 million new expenditures over on top of what we normally have. A lot of the people . . . Subject to the fact that we make an agreement with Athabasca, there will be an Athabasca improvement as well. So I think in many cases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be not only looking at this issue of roads and improving our roads in the North, it is a building in regards to bridging the gap that we did last year past Cumberland House, and also putting that new bridge there and also going into Grandmother's Bay, etc. So we're continually building all the time, Mr. Speaker.

So I think in finality and conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud, I am proud to be part of this government, this NDP government of 1997. I am proud to see that we are indeed investing in people. We're investing in our communities, we're investing them in southern Saskatchewan, and we're investing them in northern Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to say that for a person born and raised in northern Saskatchewan, that we are supporting and I am strongly supporting the budget of 1997.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to make several comments in reference to the provincial budget introduced in the Assembly; and obviously from day one we could not support the budget and I could not support the budget for, not what the budget was not going to do for northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but for Saskatchewan as a whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — And as I look through the various comments of members opposite, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of federal government bashing. And the obvious strategy here, Mr. Speaker, is there is a federal election coming up this summer. And we all know the federal election's going to happen this summer, so obviously the strategy is to discredit the federal government.

And, Mr. Speaker, I feel it's very important that we recognize one thing, is that what the federal government done to balance the books is exactly what the provincial government done. So if somebody else does it, then obviously it's not good enough. We balanced our books, we brought our economy back on stream, we are now living within our means, but nobody else can do that.

Mr. Speaker, they had the responsibility Canada-wide, as the Saskatchewan government has it Saskatchewan-wide, to balance the books, and they are indeed going to achieve that objective.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I look into the 1996 Saskatchewan economic highlights — retail sales are up 8 per cent, triple the Canadian average; new vehicle sales increased by 16 per cent; housing starts rose by more than 40 per cent . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Business investment rose by 18 per cent; crop production was up 23 per cent over 1995 . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Manufacturing shipments increased by 10 per cent, the highest in Canada . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — The number of oil wells drilled rose by 35 per cent . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Real gross domestic product was up 3.3, twice the national average.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a very, very rosy picture. And the question that every Saskatchewan resident has out there: in spite of all of the great news, Mr. Speaker, why the road system, why the poor health care system, and why the continuing social and economic decline of Saskatchewan? Why is all that occurring in spite of the great news and the good news that are presented in this budget?

Mr. Speaker, you cannot fool the people. Governance of Saskatchewan is certainly a serious business. There is no question about it. It is a very serious challenge. You must meld special-interest groups in terms of what they need and what they want. You have to look at debating the merits of privatization versus public ownership in a number of our Crowns. We have to even talk about user fees, which the NDP have spoken about in past years.

And the phrase, Mr. Speaker, that's used at that time in the financial crisis of Saskatchewan was, there are no sacred cows. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have sacred cows, and those sacred cows include health care. There is not one single party in the province of Saskatchewan and in the Dominion of Canada that can say, we are the health care defenders.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals will defend health care till the day that we die.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — And the second point, Mr. Speaker, we have to talk about in reference to the biggest problem that Saskatchewan has is of course the debt. Saskatchewan's debt is significant — 15 billion when this government took office.

And, Mr. Speaker, of that 15 billion the estimate was \$850 million per year, every single year, in interest payments alone. And the people of Saskatchewan will not forget the third party. The third party was the one that put us in this debt. And for every percentage of the PST that is now in place in Saskatchewan, we can attribute that to the third party, the Tories, Mr. Speaker. They brought this province into ruins. It

was not the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, it was the Tories. And from this day forward every person paying taxes out there, be it municipal taxes, school taxes, or PST, they can thank the Tories for those taxes. Saskatchewan's got the highest taxes of any province in Saskatchewan, save one or two.

Mr. Speaker, that debt is enormous. There is no question that we have to address that debt. And I talk about the seriousness of managing the province of Saskatchewan, and debt reduction is part of the Liberal strategy as well. Tax breaks are part of the Liberal strategy as well, and servicing the people are part of the Liberal strategy as well.

Nowadays, Mr. Speaker, it does not really matter whether you're a Liberal, Tory, or NDP. Nowadays it's common sense government. You've got to govern in a common sense way. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the reason why there is no significant difference between what the federal Liberals are doing and what the provincial New Democrats are doing.

And what's really tough, Mr. Speaker, is sitting here day after day and hearing them bash the feds and say, oh those bad guys. They've done what we done, and they're going to accomplish what we done but we are the only ones that could do that. We're the only ones that should balance our books. Well, Mr. Speaker, common sense does not only lie with the NDP. It lies now with the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue on to a few other points in reference to some of the comments made by the hon. member from Cumberland. And we certainly respect a lot of the accomplishments that he has done as an aboriginal person. He has inspired many people and certainly inspired me to get into politics.

However, Mr. Speaker, living, working, and breathing in northern Saskatchewan is not as he portrays. Everything the Minister of Northern Affairs has indicated is untrue. There are some significant breakthroughs but, Mr. Speaker, there are more significant breakthroughs needed to bring the Saskatchewan's North . . . make it part of the Saskatchewan economy and part of the whole province of Saskatchewan as a whole.

Let us speak, Mr. Speaker, about a few things, a few things. The remote housing program for example, and this is the whole point I'm trying to make — the fed-bashing going on. Let's talk about the remote housing program for a minute, Mr. Speaker. It was the federal government that has said clearly we will contribute to the remote housing program that the Minister of Northern Affairs spoke about.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what they're going to do — and this took a lot of innovation, a lot of imagination and excitement — what they said is we will contribute \$5,000 per year over a 10-year period in which we will diminish your mortgage by that amount if you are able to a . . .

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, seated in your gallery is a former member of the Legislative Assembly, the former member for Regina Rosemont I believe at that time. His name is Bill Allen. I think most members of the Assembly will recognize that name, not only as a former member but also as the current president of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party, and a person who is active in education in the city of Regina. I would ask all members to join with me to extend a warm welcome to Bill here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1615)

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Continuing on with the remote housing program, the federal government had the imagination, Mr. Speaker, to look at one thing. People in northern Saskatchewan when they're working, they get penalized by the housing disincentive associated with social housing. So let us have a remote housing program in which we will ask the working people to actually contribute to building a house, their share, and our fair share. So eventually the governments will get out of the housing business and the people that should be in the housing, which are the families, will eventually own these units.

So for an example, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government come along and they're tailgating on this federal program. Who got up and announced a lot of these programs was the Minister of Municipal Government. Now who's administrating the program is the provincial government. Who put in the money, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The federal government put in the money for the remote housing program.

So taking for example, Mr. Speaker, at 5,000 a year a decrease in a mortgage — what's happening here, Mr. Speaker, is you're saving in the long run. You're saving over social housing. Just doing some really rough guesstimates here, taxes in Ile-a-la-Crosse average lot — and the mayor is here today so he can correct me if I'm wrong — is roughly \$800 a year. And the maintenance of a home in northern Saskatchewan, and to make sure you're able to fix up the home in case of repairs, roughly about 7,500 per year.

Homeowners are contributing a \$25,000 loan to build these new homes. The lot that the municipality are giving up free, Mr. Speaker, as their contribution to this really unique and

exciting program is \$10,000. That's a municipal contribution. The town of Ile-a-la-Crosse, La Loche, Buffalo Narrows — they all contributed to this project because they saw how good it was. And, Mr. Speaker, over one case and over a period of one applicant you're looking at \$118,000 worth of savings, Mr. Speaker, that the provincial and the federal government will save over 10 years. At what cost? At 5,000 outlay the first year. And, Mr. Speaker, all they come up with is \$5,000. Of course you guarantee . . . (inaudible) . . . thousand over, but it's over a 10-year period. So you can see how they defer the payments. So you look at your interest savings, your tax savings, your maintenance savings, the contribution from the town, the loan from the homeowners, all of a sudden a \$300,000 contribution to housing in Ile-a-la-Crosse turns out to be 600,000.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is innovation. That is exciting. And that is what people want when you talk about housing in northern Saskatchewan — remote housing. To eliminate the disincentive with housing must happen. And social housing is not our total answer.

And, Mr. Speaker, continuing on with a few of the problems we speak about in reference to the budget. When you talk about housing, it must get away from this whole atmosphere that we have to control housing. Housing is a way in which you can control people. The budget has to reflect the dynamics of each region. I talk about the diverse nature of Saskatchewan politics. And I talk about the special-interest groups that are out there. Well, Mr. Speaker, northern Saskatchewan is part of this province and if you want it to continue to remain part of Saskatchewan then you should treat it as part of Saskatchewan.

Continuing on with the housing story, look at the RRAP, (residential rehabilitation assistance program), the rural rehabilitation assistance program, and the ERP, emergency repair program. Several stats, and these are provincial stats, Mr. Speaker, indicate that up to \$3,000 per month can be spent looking after an elderly in a private home — private nursing home. And suppose, Mr. Speaker, you really, really want that elderly to become independent, and there are a lot of people in northern Saskatchewan, elderly people, that live in very poor homes. Now we'll have the actual applicants for you, we'll have the actual interviews for you, and we'll have the actual numbers for you within the next two or three weeks. That's what we're currently working on.

And what you're going to find, Mr. Speaker, is you're going to find that the elderly people saying, well I'll need to get my home fixed. I can't continue living in this house and can somebody help me out there. This are the voices that are not being heard. When we hear of the 15 million, and the 20 million, and the 18 million the Minister of Northern Affairs talks about, people say, well where is it? Where is it, Mr. Speaker? The housing dollars, where are they?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's time that we start giving the benefits right directly at the local level. And it's time we started recognizing some of the elderly and their families out there are living in homes that you and I would never, ever live in. So target the elderly, Mr. Speaker. If you want an exciting, innovative budget, target the elderly when it comes to home

support programs and fixing up their homes.

As well, Mr. Speaker, he's got to stop making so many restrictions. You must simplify the process. In northern Saskatchewan many of the elderly people have a tough time to read and write simply because of the language barrier, and they have to go through all these processes. And when the demand is very high, Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of extra work by some of the field workers and some of the housing workers to go through all of these applications.

And many times seniors look at a 10-page application process and they say, well to heck with it; I can't fill that out myself. So what happens after this, Mr. Speaker? They forget about it year after year after year after year.

And I think that Saskatchewan should be ashamed when we can't house our senior citizens in northern Saskatchewan, never mind the rest of southern Saskatchewan. If you want to have support for budgets, then you must support the people.

Mr. Speaker, part of the other problem too, in terms of dealing with the issue of housing, is many times we forget to involve the municipal governments. We forget to involve the local housing authorities or the Metis locals. All these organizations are located right in all these communities and they know which people to help. They know in which area that they're able to offer expertise, and they know how best to spend that dollar.

Yet do we continue to ignore them? Mr. Speaker, we do. Local control, local benefits, and local decision making is what housing should be about, and certainly taking a lead from the feds in terms of having, you know, vision and excitement.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the far northern communities, I'll have you know that not one house under the remote housing program was given to any of the far northern communities of Uranium City, Camsell Portage, Fond du Lac, Stony Rapids or Black Lake.

Now the question we have to ask is, in this case is it because they are first nations and there is a jurisdictional problem? Well, Mr. Speaker, Stony Rapids is not a first nation, neither is Camsell and neither is U City. So in essence, they didn't get nothing. So the far northern communities are part of Saskatchewan. We must never, ever forget that, Mr. Speaker.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, is a lot of people throughout time — we complain about this a thousand times in this Assembly — we spoke about the working people out there, the people that work at some of the mines that the Minister of Northern Affairs speaks about. A thousand jobs is what he said. Well, Mr. Speaker, some of those guys that are working in the mines, they got to pay 7 or \$800 for a house that isn't worth 15, 20,000.

So the point is, you're talking about problems in housing, housing is a disincentive. Some people I've known have quit working because they had to pay too much for a house.

Now, Mr. Speaker, is that fair to Saskatchewan taxpayers? Is that fair to that northern person that wants to go to work? The

answer is no. And that's the whole thing about promoting independence and talking about exciting, invigorating and innovative governments.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've got to get away from that mind-set, is that we can do all and be all to people and that's how we can control them. Mr. Speaker, we've got to empower the people, the communities and the ideas out there, to help us invigorate Saskatchewan. That is the key to governance of this province as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to share with you a number of letters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from different people. You may not take my word for it and several members from across the room may not believe me, but I'll talk about Michael Moberly in Buffalo Narrows. He's talking about him and his wife and four kids. And I quote:

... and it's been pretty rough. We've been applying for housing for at least five months. We'll be homeless pretty soon.

And continuing on, Mr. Speaker, to Lorette Moberly, and again we talk about:

We live at my dad's and there's about 21 or 22 people staying there.

And I go on again:

There's only two bedrooms and we have 12 kids living amongst those adults.

Now, Mr. Speaker, 21 or 22 people per house, isn't that a bit ridiculous? And if you've seen some of the housing conditions and some of the housing stock in northern Saskatchewan, you'll know that there's a severe problem. There's a severe problem.

And we can continue on. We can go to Helen Tinker of Buffalo Narrows and we can talk about things like:

The mortgage was paid off, but we still owe a small amount in arrears. We've been in this house for the last 20 years and CMHC, Sask Housing, or whatever they're calling themselves nowadays, has never come to inspect the house or help with any type of repairs needed for the house.

And we can continue on, Mr. Speaker. We also have letters here from Lorette ... or Margaret Laliberté, talking about, quote the opening statement:

I am writing this letter out of desperation for approval for one of the above programs.

And the programs these are talking about, Mr. Speaker, really is the RRAP and ERP program and the remote housing program.

And I can continue on here, Mr. Speaker.

Margaret Chartier of Buffalo Narrows, again:

I'm hoping that you're able to help me get a grant to fix my house. Major repairs are needed both inside and outside.

And we have a letter here from the . . . (inaudible) . . . council of Ile-a-la-Crosse, prioritizing issues and housing was right up there, Mr. Speaker. And then we have another letter here from Lucy Laliberté, again from Beauval, speaking about houses. And we got a couple of letters of people whom I can't name at this time, Mr. Speaker, because they're involved with several court cases talking about arrears and how the government is going to go after them to address these arrears.

We have Hermaleen Gardiner of Canoe Narrows and:

I'd like to get some assistance in purchasing building material to extend my existing house so as to have easier access to the building.

And what she had done, Mr. Speaker, I have to congratulate her, she went so far as to go to a lumber store and get quotes. And she's talked to her nephews about doing the work but there is no dollars for that. And we can go on to a number of people.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've got a file here fairly thick and these are petitions calling for a comprehensive housing strategy in northern Saskatchewan, a housing strategy that eliminates the disincentives, a housing strategy that rewards the working people, and a housing strategy that helps protect the environment in which our elderly people live and our single parents, and of course you can never forget the families that are on welfare.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is what we need in this type of budget. We need to begin to hear the people. The people of Saskatchewan have spoken on a number of occasions, a number of occasions, on everything from health cares, to highway, to municipal funding, and the list goes on and on and on. And, Mr. Speaker, have we heard? The answer is no. We have listened but this government has not heard.

So continuing on, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to address some of the highlights of the federal government in terms of what they've been doing and I do this to challenge the government. Not necessarily to say they are awful guys, you've not doing your work. I'm saying these guys are doing their part, when are you going to do yours?

And, Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of examples in terms of roads. I look with interest at some of the estimates; \$2.5 billion over the next 10 years for highway construction. And the Minister of Highways gets up and makes a statement and very proud.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at that, the questions you got to begin to ask is, number one, is who is paying for some of these costs? Is the federal government involved with paying some of these costs? The answer is yes. Are the Indian bands in northern Saskatchewan and in Saskatchewan as a whole, helping pay for some of these costs? The answer is yes. Are some of the forestry companies helping to pay for some of these costs? The

answer is yes.

So, Mr. Speaker, \$2.5 billion on roads over a period of 10 years sounds like a significant amount, but if you look at what's being currently spent now and plus the contribution of other parties, I can almost guess that the amount would be the same. It's much like you and I sitting here, Mr. Speaker, and saying the next 10 years this government will have \$50 billion; \$5 billion a year in terms of their budget, we will have 50 billion. 50 billion sounds like lots, but over 10 years it isn't; so 2.5 billion over 10 years is not significant enough to repair the road structure of Saskatchewan. We know it, they know it, and everybody in Saskatchewan knows it.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the whole situation — again my math may be wrong, I was terrible in math in school — you're looking at less than 2 per cent of the provincial government budget over the next 10 years will be spent on highways — 2.5 billion.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have to start talking about real commitment — real commitment — in terms of reducing the problems with our roads.

Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan, talking about highways, much . . . In southern Saskatchewan, if you have one road out, you can go 20 or 30 miles down the road and you have another road that you can access to get to your destination.

(1630)

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not so in northern Saskatchewan. The North's only links to the outside world is through its highways and its telephone system. And right now there are a number of communities being forgotten.

And seeing now that it's spring, Mr. Speaker, Patuanak, which is 80 kilometres away from the main road, they had six wash-outs last year, Mr. Speaker. And I can almost guarantee you this year that community will be isolated for six weeks at the most.

Mr. Speaker, Turnor Lake, we spoke about Turnor Lake, 30 kilometres — not 300 kilometres, Mr. Speaker, but 30 kilometres — they'll be stranded for one to two months because all the roads are so bad that they cannot travel on these roads without a 4X4.

Mr. Speaker, you look at St. George's Hill, Dillon, and Michel — again another 60 kilometres that has to be repaired. And, Mr. Speaker, those roads are awful. I noticed a picture that one of . . . the member from Cannington showed me a picture of maybe 100 feet, there was a bad rut there, and he was showing everybody in the Assembly. And I told myself, well that's . . . every kilometre we have that type of a problem in northern Saskatchewan.

So you'd assume, Mr. Speaker, whose got the problem here? Northern Saskatchewan has had road problems for years and years and years.

So we talk about some of the innovative ideas northern Saskatchewan had, and I spoke about it last week. I'm not going to elaborate on that any further. I think it's important that we understand, with the Garson Lake road, there were promises made by the Premier that the Garson Lake road will be built as soon it became government and today, Mr. Speaker, they can't even get 250,000 a year for the next three years to build a road on training programs to link Garson Lake up to the rest of this province. And then from Garson Lake of course you have Fort Mac and that of course will have a lot of tourism come through.

And so the very important thing, Mr. Speaker, is these are the people, these are the people that have been telling year after year after year, this government and the Minister of Highways, that these problems persist. And yet year after year after year after year after year after year — it's been what? 18, 19 years — the problems persist.

So, Mr. Speaker, to really summarize how many people we're leaving out, excluding the far North in terms of the Black Lake road — I'm talking just within my village of Ile-a-la-Crosse's area — you're stranding 3,200 Saskatchewan people because of poor roads. And I don't mean stranding for one day or an hour, Mr. Speaker; I mean stranding for two, four, six, eight weeks.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that the minister recognize these roads not as roads but as trails, as tow-roads. And if you want to talk highway maintenance, Mr. Speaker, then let's talk highway maintenance. Let's put serious dollars and serious efforts into higher maintenance. And that's the only way that you're able to do things, is you put your money where your mouth is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I will not again elaborate too much longer on the highway situation. I think everybody in the Assembly knows our highways are atrocious. They know that the highways in northern Saskatchewan are worse than anywhere else in the province.

So I will not elaborate, only to point out that we will be presenting petitions as we go along. And we're inviting people from the North to send letters into myself or the Minister of Northern Affairs to talk about these problems in reference to roads.

So in closing, in reference to the highways, in closing off the discussion on the highways, again we will be presenting petitions and letters as the Assembly progresses.

Mr. Speaker, what the budget missed was some of the good, solid work being done at the northern local level by some of the mayors in lobbying the federal government. Some of the examples we have are the friendship centre movement, of which La Ronge, Buffalo Narrows and now Ile-a-la-Crosse has some affiliation with.

The Head Start program, they've got a number of . . . I believe seven projects in northern Saskatchewan that are funded by the federal government to work with the aboriginal children. You

talk about giving them a head start in life and we're talking the age of three, four, five, prior to them entering school.

We're talking about some of the job strategy dollars that many of these northern communities access from federal dollars. So these are all some of the positive things being done by the federal Liberal government.

So you throw in the remote housing, you throw in the Head Start program, the friendship centre movement, some of the training dollars, and some of the road dollars, all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, you start talking, well who is governing who here? Who is really helping out northern Saskatchewan people? And this is intended as a challenge to the NDP to start producing.

Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan we have a lack of facilities, a serious lack of facilities. And Ile-a-la-Crosse, again having the mayor here today is an extreme pleasure, but they're trying to find over a million dollars to build a new arena. Their arena is 30 years old and it needs replacement bad. And, Mr. Speaker, they have tried every means to get dollars, but the answer has always been no.

Buffalo Narrows, they're building up for their brand-new curling rink. No one helped — they had to do most of that work by themselves. Pinehouse, living next to Key Lake — beautiful big mine. And Pinehouse hasn't even got an arena, Mr. Speaker. And you talk about Turnor Lake needing all kinds of work on their rink. And is there any programs out there to help these communities? No, none whatsoever.

And, Mr. Speaker, we must begin to understand that in northern Saskatchewan the economy is very low, the tax base is non-existent, so how do you expect a bunch of people in collective communities that aren't involved in the economy to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and start building these million-dollar facilities? They simply can't, Mr. Speaker. So all this old saying of help yourselves and prove you're good, doesn't apply, Mr. Speaker, because we haven't even got bootstraps to pull ourselves up by.

Mr. Speaker, in the North we have an incredible amount of young people. I made earlier statements that up to 60 per cent are under the age of 24. And this in five to ten years, Mr. Speaker, is going to create enormous problems. The social problems that will result in a lot of these younger kids getting up into the teenage years will become incredible — too incredible for the communities to handle.

So we need to get some very aggressive and specific northern youth strategies in place right now, Mr. Speaker, talking about social development, economic development, cultural awareness, and of course dealing with a number of other issues that challenge northern youth. We need to get specific now, Mr. Speaker, because the problems associated in the future to our justice system, to our social cost, and to our social programs, and to people in general, will be astronomical. So this budget has to begin to deal with those issues.

And we also have to talk about training in mining, in natural

gas, in forestry, in tourism, in agriculture, aquaculture. The list can go on, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess in closing I just want to point out a number of closing remarks in terms of some of the issues that we've talked about, in terms of the roads, in terms of the housing, in terms of the economic programs needed, in terms of the federal contributions, in terms of the housing, in terms of some of the health problems. And, Mr. Speaker, you start looking at that and you begin to say to yourself, where is it that the member from Cumberland can say for every \$90 you pull out of the North, you put \$140 million back in?

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Northern people have not seen evidence of that. And this is why I ask for those questions in the House, is prove your figures, Mr. Member. Show me that you do indeed spend that amount of money. And I can almost guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that that proof is not there. Show me the money, and then we will actually begin to believe.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at some of the things that the North is contributing, and I challenge every member of this House to prove otherwise. The fact of the matter is in northern Saskatchewan, Cameco's operations persist and exist in northern Saskatchewan. And several years ago . . . I shouldn't say several years ago, but awhile back, Cameco's shares were sold by this government for a tune of \$750 million, Mr. Speaker. That's almost three-quarters of a billion dollars on shares of operations in northern Saskatchewan; \$1.5 billion dollars on the McArthur River uranium mine over the next 10 to 15 years. One mine alone will generate that many royalties.

Natural gas exploration. We know natural gas is being dug up and they're hitting natural gas all around Dillon area in north-western Saskatchewan.

Forestry expansion. Weyerhaeuser and Millar Western, they're all expanding northward. You talk about the tourism opportunity.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see that the North is indeed contributing a significant amount of dollars to the provincial economy, so why in the heck aren't we dealing with some of these problems?

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very impressed with some of the training programs being undertaken in northern Saskatchewan. You talk about jobs. Jobs are important, there's no question about it. But how about the other benefits associated with the economy? The economies of ownership, the economies of decision making, and the economies of profits are not afforded to northern Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Speaker, the time has come to stop that attitude. We've got to begin to empower people, communities, and ideas. This is what the gist of the whole budget missed and this is why I cannot support the budget in its form, Mr. Speaker.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank the member from Cumberland for making some of the points that he did. There's no question that there's a federal election coming around the

corner, and people are aware of that. They're not silly. And of course I'm very, very, very proud and very, very happy for the people of La Ronge and area in getting their new facility. I say great. That's good for them. And I say it's also great for a number of other communities in Saskatchewan to get a new hospital. I support the new hospital in La Ronge and I support the hospital services all throughout Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, the question of northern Saskatchewan is really, what's happening with St. Martin's Hospital in La Loche. La Loche people are tired of hearing these trailers being referred to as their hospital. And I've said it once before and I'll say it again, as long as those trailers stand in La Loche as St. Martin's Hospital, it will be a tribute to that government's commitment to health care. As long as it stands.

So, Mr. Speaker, the people of the North must have a greater sense of ownership over the system that they live under. In order to survive, northern people must rid themselves of the systems of disincentives. There are linguistic differences, there are cultural differences, and perhaps even racial differences. But, Mr. Speaker, we, the people of northern Saskatchewan, want and cry and ask and beg and demand and need and want and the whole bloody thing, is equal treatment.

We're not demanding special treatment. We're not trying to be put on the pedestal here, Mr. Speaker. We're asking for fair treatment. We're asking for decent roads. We're asking for decent housing and we're asking for decent highways and hospitals. And we're asking for a future for our children; that's the most important thing.

And we're not asking that at a cost to the government. Like I said, we'll contribute. We said what we're going to contribute. Now it's high time that this government puts up the talk that they've been giving to people of the North for many, many years.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, after that speech, although I disagree with the slant and the angle that the member come from . . . came from, I think if the member for North Battleford were a gentleman, he'd stand up and just hand over that northern critic portfolio to the member for the North.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Instead of just flying over the North, I think this member does actually know what's going on in the North; he's been there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, after a number of years in this House and a few years in government and many tough years since 1991, I want to tell you and tell the people who are watching and listening today what it feels like

— what it feels like this time as compared to the last few times, of budget.

I can remember 1991, '92, '93, '94, '95 is getting a little better, but the early years especially, where you had to make all the tough decisions and you thought . . . and everybody in the province, in fact everybody in maybe Canada, thought you were wrong. And you'd walk out in the street and you'd suck it in and you'd go out there and just let people hit on you. And that was tough, Mr. Speaker, really tough.

But year after year we did that. And I credit that to the Premier of this province who led this caucus through the woods to victory many times and led the people. And it feels so, so good as an individual, Mr. Speaker. I don't think . . . people outside can't relate. But it feels so good inside to be able to start giving back to the people, investing in them again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — And because of that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank a number of people. I want to thank the Premier for his leadership. Because I can remember sitting around the cabinet table in those tough years — not the cabinet table; I just dreamt about it then — but the caucus table those years. And one by one we'd all take a turn saying, gee we just can't do that; we just can't do that.

And with the leadership of a few people, everybody came onside. And through the democratic process of talking things out, we achieved some goals that most thought we could never achieve. So I thank the Premier and my colleagues in this caucus.

I also want to thank the staff that worked for us, because they took much of the brunt of the static through the tough years as well. I also want to thank the public service, who had to go out and explain why we were doing things and took just as much static as we did in many cases.

But finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Saskatchewan. I can remember in 1993, in 1993 where I could barely walk down the street of my own home town for fear of being verbally attacked. People who knew you well, and you knew they didn't dislike you; they just thought you were doing something wrong.

But I thank the people of Saskatchewan for their foresight in sticking with us for a second term so that we could prove that once again, like in 1944, like in 1961-62 — no, what was it? — '71, and like in 1991, we again . . . people put the confidence in a government with a track record that brought us out of the woods of debt, the depths of debt into a time when not only we balanced the budget but in this budget we look to the out years, to the year 2000 with a surplus of \$200 million, Mr. Speaker. I thank them very much for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — But before I get into . . . and I'm going to have to cut a little short today because of other people want to speak. But before I get into that, Mr. Speaker, couldn't you make a great game show today? I was just sitting here looking at the Liberal opposition. Today's game show is, how long you been a Liberal this time? And you could take the member for the north-east of Melfort. How long does the member from . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I can see I got their attention. But the member for Melfort could be the first candidate. How long has the member from Melfort been a Liberal?

An Hon. Member: — Three years.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thirty years? Oh maybe. Fifteen years, three years? There's a winner — maybe three years.

How long has the member for Wood River . . . no, Arm River? How long is it? He could be the next candidate. How long has the member for Arm River been a Liberal? He must be in his mid-40s. Has it been 30 years? Has it been 15 years? Has it been 2 or 3 years? Well maybe. I can well remember him walking around with the Conservative candidate in Arm River.

And you can go through . . . What about the member from Melville? He could be the next contestant. How long has the member from Melville been a Liberal this time? And he carries his age well, so I'm not sure how old he is, the member from Melville. But I don't think he's been a Liberal for much more than two or three years, just like the rest of them.

Mr. Speaker, my point is this, and you can go on and on through everyone. In fact there's one, one member of the Liberal caucus who claims that he's had a Liberal membership the longest. And that poor, lost soul wanted to cross the floor from this side of the House. And I guess if we were good stewards we'd go over and try to save him, but that'll be a lot of work. The longest . . . he claims to be the longest card-carrying Liberal in the House.

Mr. Speaker, my point is this. If you look over the history of this province's elections you'll see that the New Democratic Party has held 40 to 45 per cent of the vote fairly consistently. Fairly consistently. But every generation there's a new generation of Liberals and Tories. Last time they were all Tories. Remember there wasn't a Liberal in the House.

Well it's the Liberals' generation this time, turn to take the 10 years. Mr. Speaker, it is true and they know it. They flip-flop between Liberals and Tories. Our vote — and check the record — our vote stays about the same. They flip-flop between Liberals and Tories.

And, Mr. Speaker, to prove my point, to prove my point, I listen and I repeat some of the comments of those members on the Liberal side of the House now. Some of those brand-new shiny Liberals over there.

They talk about . . . Mr. Speaker, they talk about they want the schools to stay open; you guys are bad guys because you're closing the schools. You want the hospitals to stay open; you guys are bad guys because you're closing the hospitals. We

should build all the roads, because you guys are bad because there's potholes in the roads. And it goes on and on and on.

Well just think back. Just think back. Just think back previous to the Conservative Party coming into power and when they came into power. They were going to do her all. Remember? They were going to balance the budget and give more services and build more roads and build hospitals and schools and give grants out and manage this country.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they took their eye off the ball and spent a billion dollars a year for 10 years every year, than they took in in revenues, putting the gross debt of this province up to \$15 billion. And now the Liberals come into this House and they say the same thing. Check the record. I mean don't believe me, Mr. Speaker, check the records. They're going to do it all. More services — more services, fewer taxes, more roads, more schools, more hospitals . . .

An Hon. Member: — What about the debt?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — And reduce the debt, exactly. I forgot about . . . I was searching for that one . . . and reduce debt. More services, reduce the debt, and reduce taxes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how that works, but I can remember a government with a similar . . . I can remember a government with a similar calculator about 1982, and that calculator didn't work then and it isn't going to work now for these brand-new, shiny Liberals. It isn't going to work.

My point, Mr. Speaker, then is you can't have it all. And it's credibility that counts in this game. And I ask the member . . . I was almost excited when the member from Athabasca got up and he had the budget in his hand, and I thought finally one of the Liberal members is going to talk about the budget in the budget speech debate. Because I've been listening and it's been very, very thin about the budget — very, very thin speeches on the budget.

Mr. Speaker, it's thin because they've got nothing to criticize. They've got very little to criticize. So all they can say is, because they think it's popular, they're going to build all the schools, and rebuild the hospitals, and build all the roads, provide all the services everybody wants. You can't do it. You've got to have a balanced approach.

And, Mr. Speaker, what are the Liberals saying? You know, you've got to call a spade a spade sometimes, and I'll give you a few examples.

In the *Kelvington Chronicle* of Tuesday, March 5, the member for Kelvington was saying:

I will be expressing your dissatisfaction (talking to the people) with the decisions made for the delivery of health care and will be opposing any further cut-backs to health care.

She's going to oppose any further cut-backs to health care. Okay, that's her position, on that day. I'm not sure what it'd be

the next day.

But then in a TV interview with Mr. Melenchuk, the Leader of the Liberal Party, he's asked about . . . he says, I was thinking the Saskatchewan people have done a tremendous job because their taxes, utilities, and tariffs have been increased by \$1.3 billion since 1992, and that balancing occurs as a direct transfer from their bank accounts to the bank accounts of the Saskatchewan government.

Now here's . . . just let me parenthetically say this — from their bank accounts to the bank accounts of the Saskatchewan government. This is the Leader of the Liberal Party who can't differentiate between the people's bank account and the government's bank account. It's the same bank account, Mr. Speaker, because the people are the government when it comes to bank accounts. But Mr. Melenchuk has that yet to learn.

Anyway, when he says how are you going to get rid of the \$1.3 billion that they've taken from the folks, that we have taken from the folks, he says, well health care. So we have the member from Kelvington saying no more cut-backs in health care. We have the Leader of the Liberal Party saying he's going to cut back health care. In fact the other day he was quoted as saying \$100 million cut in health care.

And then there's another one: "Melenchuk sees private clinics as a safety valve." Cutting back health care, cutting back health care by \$100 million and then he sees private clinics as a safety valve. Well I guess you'd need a safety valve if you're going to keep cutting back as we on this side of the House have not cut back health care by one red cent. In fact, we've increased it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but my point is this . . . oh yes, I will go on. One more. Mr. Melenchuk says a Melenchuk government would pass legislation that disbands the province's 30 health boards and replaces them with local and elected boards, sort of like back to the future. But then Mr. Osika, the member from Melville . . . Oh I'm sorry, I . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I think the hon. member already recognizes the error in the rule of debate. All hon. members will know that in debate in the Assembly that references to other members seated in the . . . with seats in the Assembly, they are to be referred to only by their formal positions held in the Assembly. And I'll ask the hon. member to acknowledge that and continue in his debate.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I apologize for the matter, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, the member from Melville, after Mr. Melenchuk says that he's going to disband the health boards, the member from Melville says . . . the member from Melville promoted an all-elected board to the best would be . . . an all-elected board would be the best compromise.

So the leader wants no boards elected. The member from Melville, who used to be the leader, wants the boards to be elected. Mr. Speaker, the inconsistency of the Liberal Party is going to be their demise. You can't be a chameleon in politics and get away with it, and that's what they're trying to do. And they will try and they will try and they will try and they will get

away with it for a little while until the people understand what a chameleon looks like, because a chameleon is anything you want it to be.

But do you know what? A chameleon will never be your government, ever, because you've got to stand for something. You've got to put your policies forward and stand by them, as we did from 1991 to 1997, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about this brochure, just a few points. The 1997 budget is balanced and we're going to have three more balanced budgets.

This is a little "Saskatchewan Budget Highlights" book I wish everyone in the province would pick up and look at. It capsulates what we're doing. And by the year 2000 the interests on the "... government debt will be \$200 million less than in 1995." Mr. Speaker, in five years, in five years the interest payments will be \$200 million less. That means bringing the interest rate down by several ... or bringing the debt down by several billion dollars.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, by the year 2000 — and here's one that is very, very important number and this is what the bond dealers look at — "By 2001, the Province's debt as a percentage of the GDP will be cut almost in half."

The percentage of the debt in 1993 was nearly 70 per cent. In 1997, the province ... as a percentage of the debt of the GDP (gross domestic product) will be cut to 48 per cent, and by the year 2001 it's 36 per cent. That tells you there is good fiscal management, reduction of debt, and growth in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people pay less in sales tax than any other province with a sales tax. And you might say, well what about Manitoba? Manitoba is 7 per cent; Saskatchewan is 7 per cent. But Manitoba has a broader base; therefore their people pay significantly more sales tax than our folks pay.

And guess who the two lowest provinces in Canada ... Now granted Alberta doesn't have a sales tax, so we're only talking about provinces with sales tax. Alberta doesn't have a sales tax but they've got just about a \$900 health care premium and their licence are two or three times what ours is, but we'll leave that alone.

The two provinces with the lowest sales tax in Canada is NDP B.C. (British Columbia) and NDP Saskatchewan. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker? What about Newfoundland? What's that? Liberal. Is that Liberal? Oh, they're about the highest. And what about New Brunswick? Well they're almost as high. Every Liberal and Tory province is higher than the two New Democratic provinces in Canada — in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And they talk about services and lowering debt and lowering taxes. I don't think they have it.

(1700)

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan families pay the lowest overall

taxes and household charges in Canada. The lowest taxes and household charges, when you lump everything together. Well, well I think, Mr. Speaker, I've made my point there.

And I'm going to take my place now because I know other members want to speak. But there's so much more I want to say. I will get a chance to cover agriculture more in the Agriculture estimates, which I will do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say one thing. I don't want people to forget. This is about leadership; this is about a government and governments that are going to be taking this country and our provinces into the future.

I hear the members opposite over there tell me every time there's an increase in SaskPower rate or SaskTel rate or any Crown rate, they're up in arms about the increase, and the increase would amount to \$10 a month or varying charges, about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know I haven't heard one peep — not one complaint — about the \$260 million cut from the crop sector, from our safety net package. I haven't heard a peep from the \$320 million cut from the Crow benefit. I haven't heard a peep from the \$65 million cut from the demurrage and everything. I would ask those members in the days to come, Mr. Speaker, to table their correspondence — table their correspondence — with their federal government complaining about these severe cuts to rural Saskatchewan, devastating cuts to rural Saskatchewan.

Don't stand up in this House and try to tell ... talk about the revenge, rural revenge of this government. There has been no government in the history of this country who in such a few short years cut more to rural Saskatchewan than the Liberal government in Ottawa, even with an Agriculture minister from this province, Mr. Speaker. And that's deplorable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say finally that it is a pleasure for me, it feels good for me to be able to support a budget. I want to challenge the members opposite, the member from Humboldt with the gimmick of the day, using special needs people, using street people, hungry children, for their gimmickry as ... bringing it in this House. Using them politically. If she wants, Mr. Speaker ... and I was going to say a lot more about this but ... (inaudible) ... time, I won't.

If she and her colleagues really care about those people ... the fact that we doubled, doubled the number to \$25 million for our child action benefit plan, more for education, to help those people off the street. If they really care ... we'll see if they're hypocrites or not, especially that member from Humboldt. If she's not a hypocrite ...

The Speaker: — Order, order. I think the hon. member will recognize that in the use of his language in his last sentence that it was not befitting the level of language that would be considered to be appropriate for debate in the Assembly. And I'll simply ask him to withdraw his remark and continue his debate.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Okay, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. I'll

withdraw those remarks.

If that member wants to prove to the people that she's serious and that she's not using special needs and poor people, then she will vote for this budget, as I am very proud to do, sir. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker. I am most privileged to be able to stand in my place today and make comments on the 1997 budget put forward by the current government.

And I do want to begin by saying that I agree with one comment made by the member from Watrous, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture. And that is his focus on saying that this is about leadership. Because it most certainly is, Mr. Speaker. It is about leadership. Leadership is not about placing responsibility on the shoulders of others when it is one's own personal responsibility.

It's not about requiring the Liberal opposition to be responsible for the actions of any other government. It's not about the member from Kindersley being responsible for any of the actions of a government that has preceded him, any more than they would like to be held accountable for the actions of Premier Glen Clark in not telling the truth to the people of the province of British Columbia. Nor would they wish to be responsible for the \$10 billion deficit brought in by the NDP government under Bob Rae.

This is about leadership indeed. It's about leadership of this province under the administration of these people opposite, Mr. Speaker. That's what this is about. And although I've been most interested in listening to the comments of all members on the budget, and I have listened to most of them and I've been very impressed by people's comments, the repetitive comments on the part of the government can only be seen as part of political strategy.

And unfortunately I must say, Mr. Speaker, that this budget is simply a form of politics of packaging. And rather than my speaking in terms about what this is going to do to the people of Saskatchewan, which has eloquently been described by many people here with very differing points of view, what I'm going to do with the time allotted me today is to simply talk about the real numbers.

So I hope that you will find this somewhat illuminating, because I most certainly did. And I would never begin to say that I have the financial expertise to understand this. So just like my questions of the Premier earlier today where I did indeed go to investment bankers first, I wish for you to know that I indeed went to financial experts on the numbers on not only in the budget, but using the 1996 fall report of the Provincial Auditor.

My comments therefore are purely based on the numbers in the budget. And it is legitimate indeed to talk about the increasing of the government services organizations' debt as increases in the debt of the province.

The so-called surplus in these budget accounts and reductions in the accumulated deficit — these are not real, Mr. Speaker, because it does not come from bringing the spending of the government under control. And that's the responsibility of government departments and it's the responsibility of the ministers in charge. Rather, where this really comes from, Mr. Speaker, is the result of transferring excess earnings of the Crowns and Liquor and Gaming over to the General Revenue Fund.

We've heard over and over again from the Provincial Auditor of this province, how significant it is that we do not have full reporting when only the General Revenue Fund is openly discussed. The assumption that one has to make to do all of this is that the Crowns and Liquor and Gaming are government departments. But when I do this in this discussion, then their operating budgets have to be included as well. And what the table for the accumulated deficit would ultimately show is that the debt of our province, Mr. Speaker, has increased since the beginning of the decade, it has not decreased.

In addition, the table for the debt reduction account — and that's on page 64 of the government's own budget — it only says that during the 1996-97 fiscal year and the 1997-98 fiscal year, this government plans to set aside money to reduce the debt of the province.

In fact they have paid down the government services organization debt in only one fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, and that was 1994-95. In every other year that debt has increased. They have paid down the debt of government enterprises, and of course you know that that means the Crowns and Sask Liquor and Gaming, in only one out of three of the past five fiscal years. Overall the debt of our province has grown by \$357 million since 1991-92, and decreased by only \$373 million since 1992-93 — all the result of paying down \$640 million of the government enterprises debt while government services debt grew by \$267 million since then.

This is truly a shell game, Mr. Speaker, and there is only one taxpayer that has to deal with all of this. And that's one of the great frustrations that I've heard about. Of course we have to be concerned about what happens from the federal government and the implications of any offloading on provincial governments. But of course we have to be concerned about provincial governments and the way that they offload or download onto municipalities. But ultimately there's only one person who pays the piper, Mr. Speaker, and they most certainly feel the actual affects of what the real budget means to them.

So if we add the GSO (government services organization) debt, for example running a deficit in government services, or adding the accumulated deficit in the General Revenue Fund, does indeed mean that the debt of our province is going up, and putting money in the debt reduction account is nothing more than that. It's phoney.

So I'm going to comment on three areas of what come to mind to me because of . . . in this budget. The first is . . . I must be touching some little nerve here. There must be one left and I'm

getting on it, Mr. Speaker, because the member from Regina South, I always know that I can get his firm approval whenever the noise level goes up on the other side of the House.

The three areas in this budget that come to mind, there are certain words that best describe this, Mr. Speaker. The first is embarrassing; the second is irresponsible; and the third is shameful.

So let me describe what it is that ultimately operationally defines those words for me from this budget.

Embarrassing: it is the worst case of distorted budgeting that this province has ever seen, certainly in my lifetime, and likely since 1905. This government has taken the art of distortion and distorting budgeting to new heights of misrepresentation.

Secondly, why is it embarrassing? Because it is phoney. Entirely an exercise in shuffling numbers to make it appear that the government is meeting its targets, when all it is doing is increasing the provincial debt and taxing every single living person in this province to the limit of their capacity to pay.

Thirdly, why is it embarrassing? Because it is based on bad forecasting, unrealistic assumptions about the growth in revenues, including what can be expected from Liquor and Gaming, what becomes the main source of funding for the so-called surplus in the 1997-98 fiscal year.

The second thing that had come to mind which I will now operationally define is the word irresponsible. It shows that this government has only one financial strategy and that's to spend every single penny that it can squeeze out of the people of this province. And they do not even intend to use it for front-line services like hospitals or schools where services have been cut badly.

Not one minister of this government has brought the spending of his or her department under control. Not one has a strategy for even doing that because we most certainly have not seen evidence of it anywhere.

This government is selling the assets of the province of Saskatchewan — like Cameco shares — the assets of the people of this province. It is like selling your own house to make it look as if our financial house, under this government, is in order when it is not.

It continues to use the power of the Crowns to raise rates and the power of liquor and gaming to make people spend money. To collect revenues rather than bring the spending of the government under control. And that is irresponsible.

It continues to put the futures of the children of this province and our grandchildren in jeopardy by taxing — through excessive income in sales taxes, utility rates, liquor and gaming, and downloading onto local governments — everyone in this province far beyond their ability to pay, while leaving more and more debt for our children and grandchildren. And that, Mr. Speaker, is irresponsible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — And what is shameful? Let me tell you what is shameful. It is a shameful display of the abuse of taxpayers of this province. A shameful display of number crunching; the worst in innumeracy. Disgusting in its complete disregard for the well-being of this province, especially those on low incomes and fixed incomes — those who need the help most, Mr. Speaker.

Arrogance for believing that the people have to stay here is another thing, Mr. Speaker. Shameful for disregarding those who prefer to stay close to their family and friends. And those who have to stay because they have nowhere else to go.

For some . . . Now let's just look at some of the numbers here, and I will move on, Mr. Speaker, because I know there are others who wish to speak. I'm going to just summarize some of them as I see as the most important if one were to get an overview of what has actually been done in this budget.

And you know, I'm just going to make one little side comment here, Mr. Speaker, and please indulge me.

(1715)

Yes, my profession is a clinical psychologist. And one of the things that is truly tragic is how the people in this government continue to employ what is called cognitive dissonance. Rather than wanting to participate fully in understanding all the different component parts that make up a full plan, which would allow us to debate completely on this issue, they expunge from their minds anything that makes them feel uncomfortable and doesn't fit with their little template. And that's unfortunate. Because if we truly listened well and participated fully, the people of this province would be the beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, some of the numbers. Let's just look at the revenues. This is the forecast for 1996-97, the revenues. Taxes increase by 7.56 per cent, which equals \$215.42 million over 1995-96. It's from their own books, Mr. Speaker. Didn't make this up anywhere; it's from here, in black and white.

Individual income tax revenues are up 14.58 per cent. That's \$162.06 million. And, Mr. Speaker, we have not seen that in this province for years, increase in income tax to that amount. Sales tax revenues by 5.27 per cent of an increase — \$41.06 million.

And remember something, Mr. Speaker. This is the forecast for 1996-97, and of course I know this is really confusing for people who haven't read their own budget. But remember, the reduced PST on March 21 won't make any difference here at all because this account closes March 31.

Non-renewable natural resources. These revenues increase by 33 per cent. That's \$222.06 million, almost all of it from oil. Transfers from government utilities increased by 52 per cent, Mr. Speaker, \$181 million. The sale of Cameco shares, 365 million. Revenues from Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming go

down by 63 per cent to 182 million. Go figure. My gracious. This is very interesting.

The other revenues decrease too. Transfers from the federal government do indeed decrease, Mr. Speaker, by 25 per cent. But you know what's very interesting, Mr. Speaker — from the day the Chrétien government was elected in Ottawa, they have not spent five minutes blaming the Mulroney government for Somalia or any other kind of thing that transpired before them. You know what that's called? It's called leadership, Mr. Speaker.

The total revenue increases by almost 7 per cent, Mr. Speaker, 7 per cent, which is \$350 million and this is very high. The total revenue without the transfers from government entities increased by 3.5 per cent — \$169 million.

Now let's look at the expense side. Total expenses go down by what? Get prepared because this sure ain't whopping, Mr. Speaker — 0.01 per cent. In other words, a whole \$62,000 out of a \$5 billion budget, Mr. Speaker. Now you have got to be kidding.

Total expenses excluding the debt service charges increased by 1.23 per cent — \$53 million. This government, Mr. Speaker, has assumed exceptionally high rates of growth on individual income tax revenues, sales tax revenues, and oil tax revenues; and this is possible and the only one that they'll probably know by now for this fiscal year. They have total revenue, excluding the transfers from government entities like Crowns, growing at 3.5 per cent, which I suspect is on the high side for incomes and revenues, although real GDP is expected to grow at that rate.

I'll spend just one brief moment now talking about the 1997-98 estimates. The revenues, Mr. Speaker, total revenues will be decreasing by 7.45 per cent, which is \$408 million, in every major category — every major category. Total revenue, excluding transfers from the government entities, will be decreasing by 6.7 per cent, which is 338 million. Total spending decreasing will be a whole 1.24 per cent, which is \$64.5 million.

Now I don't know what else to call this, Mr. Speaker, except number shuffling. And how realistic can it really be? How realistic can it really be?

The accumulated deficit is a very serious situation — on page 64 — adding \$162 million to the debt of this province in 1996-97. And we don't even know what is planned for the Crowns, but the government expects that the revenue from Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming is going to fall by \$162 million. Then adding 432.5 million to the debt of this government in 1997-98, and Liquor and Gaming is expected to generate \$287 million in excess earnings. Confusing? I think so.

I would like to pose this question during my comments now, in hope that at some future date the Finance minister will answer it. My question is this. We have had reference after reference to a rainy-day fund, Mr. Speaker, and I'm asking one simple question. How much cash is in it? How much cash is in the

rainy-day fund?

Because I'll tell you what this reminds me of. It reminds me of the fact that somebody may be wanting to save for a car, so they have a glass jar in which they put their money. And they find that they've saved a whole \$900, only to come along and see two things — their local property taxes go up and they have to go in and take money out of there; or an unexpected insurance thing that they have to pay for.

And every time they go to the glass jar, Mr. Speaker, they stick in what? An IOU. Well let me tell you, it doesn't leave me feeling very secure to think that the Finance minister talks about a rainy-day fund when all that's happening is the General Revenue Fund is basically sticking IOUs in a glass jar.

We're talking about the need in this province, Mr. Speaker, for a full plan, a complete plan, not this stuff, not the politics of packaging. I will support a budget that has a full plan. And how can we really have full debate without full knowledge? Where's the plan for all the government's responsibilities? Where's the plan to reduce the accumulated deficit in 1998? The truth is that every target is for the General Revenue Fund, missing out 40 per cent of what's going on. What about all of it? And the most important question is, does anybody even know it? That's what I need to know.

Now in 1991, Mr. Speaker, I did something unprecedented in this legislature. I voted in favour of the government's Speech from the Throne, and I did that for a particular reason, Mr. Speaker. In 1991 this government came to power in the fall and it chose to have a Speech from the Throne immediately. That was taking a great risk. Did we believe that they would be fully prepared to govern? Absolutely not. How could they be when they've been out of government for so long. But they chose to show that kind of leadership. And I showed them my support by voting in favour of their Speech from the Throne, albeit relatively short, because I wanted to give them their support — I wanted to give my support to governance.

So I've proven a point, that when I believe in something I will vote for it, Mr. Speaker. When I believe in something, I will. Now granted members of government did not appreciate what I did. They acted like I had done something foolish. But I would vote in favour of a budget that I believed would ultimately be in the best, best interests of the people of this province. I would vote for a budget that would show that it had a full and complete plan with all of the information necessary for me to make a good decision. But I will not, Mr. Speaker, vote in favour of a budget that is based purely on the politics of packaging and purely on number shuffling. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I say I will not be voting in favour of the 1997 budget.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to keep my remarks short and concise. As I see this particular budget in view of my constituency and the people of Saskatchewan, four areas are of prime importance. As the critic for Agriculture and as an agriculturalist myself and representing an agricultural constituency, that is very important.

In this particular budget, Mr. Speaker, agriculture takes another

whack from this government. That has been the history of this government. Cuts to agriculture, cuts to agriculture, cuts to agriculture. Mr. Speaker, agriculture is taking a \$55 million cut to the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program, a very excellent long-term program, Mr. Speaker, which is greatly needed in this province, particularly in light of the decreasing values of our agricultural commodities.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities are another area of great importance in my constituency and in this province, both rural and urban municipalities. They also are taking dramatic cuts, Mr. Speaker, in this particular budget. Again that hurts the people of this province because those monies will be taxed back on the property, on those that can't afford to pay it, Mr. Speaker.

The other area of great concern in my constituency, and indeed across this province, is the highway system. The minister brags about how much extra she added to the highways budget. Mr. Speaker, that additional \$30 million won't even maintain the roads in the state they are today. They will continue to deteriorate. The only new money is the monies that have been added in the infrastructure program. And that only kicks in if the federal government puts up their money and the municipalities. And the municipalities, Mr. Speaker, can't afford to put in extra money; they just took a \$28 million cut from this government.

In my constituency and indeed across a good portion of south-east Saskatchewan, the western border of this province, Mr. Speaker, the government raises very, very significant numbers from oil revenues — 600-plus million dollars last year, close to \$600 million estimated for the next year. That money is taken out of our area, the roads suffer because of all that activity, and yet the government and the Minister of Highways does not put the money back into those areas to support those roads.

There is a small project happening in my constituency, Mr. Speaker — approximately two kilometres, approximately two kilometres of road work is going to be done. Nowheres near what needs to happen, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Watrous and the member from Greystone, Mr. Speaker, talked about leadership. And indeed this entire budget is about leadership. We have all been elected to lead, Mr. Speaker, and the government's primary role is to lead the people of Saskatchewan. But this government leads only in blaming.

In their first term they blamed the Devine government; in this term they blame the federal Liberal government. They are leaders, Mr. Speaker, they're leaders in blaming and in political patronage.

If I had the time, Mr. Speaker, I would go through a list of all of the past candidates, MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), and those who sought nominations for the NDP, and point out exactly where they are now placed in government. Don't have time to do that tonight, but I certainly will at some point in time, Mr. Speaker.

What this government lacks, Mr. Speaker, is leadership, with a vision for job creation and for prosperity for this province. For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this budget.

The Speaker: — I hear the clock being called and it being past the normal time of adjournment, the House will now stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

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