

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of residents of Tisdale and Prince Albert. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find out all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

These petitioners come from the Prince Albert, Birch Hills, Meath Park area of the province, Mr. Speaker. I so submit.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, as well to present petitions.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake's fiasco.

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

And this petition is signed by people from the Carnduff area and another one from Prince Albert. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake's fiasco.

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

The communities, Mr. Speaker, are the community of Naicam and Spalding. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I too ask to present a petition and these are people who are concerned about the severance payments to Jack Messer and the Channel Lake fiasco and they're signed by people from Annaheim, Shellbrook, and Tisdale.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the severance payment to Jack Messer and for the immediate calling of a public inquiry surrounding the facts regarding Channel Lake.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Redvers, Wawota, Storthoaks, and Manor.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased on behalf of Saskatchewan residents to present a petition as well. The petition is surrounding the whole Jack Messer-Channel Lake fiasco and I'm pleased to present on their behalf. This petition, Mr. Speaker, comes from residents of Muenster, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens that are concerned about the closure of the Plains hospital. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Those who've signed these petitions are from the communities of Frontier, Kyle, Herbert, Swift Current, and Moose Jaw. I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today again to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan regarding the Plains hospital.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains hospital may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks from Assiniboia, Fir Mountain, Glentworth, Coronach, and Willow Bunch. I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join my colleagues in representing people who are concerned about closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be

continued.

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

The signatures are from Regina, Edenwold, and Pilot Butte. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition today. The prayer of relief reads as follows:

That your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent its closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Your petitioners come from Pilot Butte, Moosomin, and Regina. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues today in bringing petitions forward regarding the Plains hospital. The prayer is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that essential services provided at the Plains may be continued; and further, that the government not turn this hospital into SIAST offices for political reasons.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are from the Ponteix area. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present petitions on behalf of the people of the community and town of Maple Creek. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach the necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project with or without federal assistance.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will every pray.

And I'm happy to present them on behalf of these folks today.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; to save the Plains Health Centre; and to end the severance payments to Jack Messer and to call an independent public inquiry into Channel Lake.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: what are the results of the circulation of his proposed provincial policy for game farm development in Saskatchewan, stakeholder consultation document, and accompanying questionnaire, and particularly: (a) what groups of stakeholders were consulted in this process; (b) which organizations responded to the questionnaire; (c) how many individuals responded from each of the following categories listed in point no. 12 of the questionnaire: (1) farmer; (2) game farmer; (3) hunter; (4) member of wildlife organization.

I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 23 ask the government the following question:

Of the ministers of Energy and Mines and SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management): how well are provincial government, cities, and industries complying with the ARET — that's the accelerated reduction on emissions and toxins established in 1994 — and the VCR — the federal government voluntary challenge and registry — for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the province over the past year; what level of hydrogen sulphide and other toxins, dioxins, chlorines, salts, styrenes, heavy metals, and other chemicals, acids, etc. are presently entering the environment as a result of crude oil and natural gas production in Saskatchewan; what clean-up of crude oil, salt waters, chemicals, and heavy metals is presently occurring in the province under the authority of the Department of Energy and Mines, The Pipe Lines Act, and The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act; what volume of work is being directed to companies like Crude Oil Separators Limited?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of the Assembly, I have someone new to introduce in the gallery today and her name is Ms. Eleanor New. Ms. New is a constituent of mine and some of you may know her brother, Vern New, now a retired police chief for the Regina Police Service.

Eleanor has spent many years involved in community and volunteer service in the city of Regina, where she has lived the majority of her life. Her most notable work has been within Regina's Lutheran community; and she is an avid scholar, Mr. Speaker, and has studied in a vast array of subject areas from theology to native studies, and I believe she's still an active student. Once it gets into your blood, you just can't get rid of it. So Eleanor indeed epitomizes the goals of lifelong learning.

Mr. Speaker, Eleanor spent the morning here in our excellent Legislative Library and touring this magnificent building. And I'd be most pleased if we could all welcome her here to observe the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

New Nova Scotia Political Party

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I have a newsflash from Nova Scotia courtesy of a leaked document from my source buried deeply in the bowels of the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). Sorry, Mr. Speaker, if my imagery is a bit unseemly.

When last we heard, the results of the Nova Scotia election had the governing Liberal Party deadlocked for first place with the upstart NDP (New Democratic Party) at 19 seats each. The rag and bone shop of Tories had 14 seats. This is a precarious situation for a government, Mr. Speaker.

So, like Liberals and Tories from the beginning of recorded Canadian time, the Nova Scotia old-line parties have come up with a practical and unprincipled solution. My source tells me — and I am dismayed to report to this Assembly — that Liberals and the Tories have buried their differences, as if there were any, and joined together to form a new governing party.

As our Premier would say, Liberal, Tory, same old story. The name of that new Maritime party, Mr. Speaker, is to be: the Saskatchewan Party. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Future Plans for Plains Health Centre

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is playing what many people hope is just a cruel April Fool's Day joke on the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan.

The government has announced that it plans to make the Plains hospital the future home of SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology). At the same time, the NDP is confronted with facts which clearly show that health care is in critical condition. The government says it will save \$3 million in annual operating costs if it closes the Plains but is willing to spend \$108 million to consolidate services and another \$30 million to upgrade the facility.

This issue has never made sense in health care terms. The fact that the NDP would even consider spending \$138 million to save \$3 million in annual costs underlines the fact that it doesn't make sense in financial terms either. The role this government is taking is based on a poor plan or no plan at all. No responsible government could possibly make this kind of decision and we're waiting to hear that this is the NDP's idea of a sick April Fool's Day joke.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements on Party Membership

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The great philosopher George Santayana said, quote, "Those who cannot remember the past are sure to repeat it."

To prevent some members from falling into this historic trap, allow me to please quote from *Hansard* of April 2, 1996. Sort of an instructive trip down memory lane. On page 673, we see the member from Kelvington-Wadena saying, I would like to remind some people that April Fool's Day does not last all week and I would like to inform the people of Saskatchewan, particularly those in Liberal constituencies, that we are continuing our loyalty and support to the cause of the Liberal Saskatchewan Party, the official opposition, to the people of Saskatchewan. To which some hon. members said, "Hear, Hear!"

And on page 672, in the worst mixed metaphor in history in this Assembly, the member from Saltcoats said, the media states today that an offer has been made for the members of our caucus to join another club — a third-place club, I might add . . . I might add, but none of us can swim and we're not about to jump on a sinking ship.

Rather than jumping from a sink . . . from the rink onto a sinking Tory ship, the non-swimmers and the members of the Liberal hockey team were said, he said, standing pat. Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, a couple of members who claimed to understand him were heard to say, "Hear, Hear!"

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Peewee Hockey Championships

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, to become a provincial champion in a sporting competition is extremely difficult. But to do so two times in a row is a tremendous accomplishment. This rarely happens in minor hockey because the roster is constantly changing due to age restrictions.

I'm very pleased to report that the BIRS peewee Raptors hockey team from my constituency is a provincial champion for the second year in a row. The team captured the peewee D championship by defeating Maymont-Perdue in the provincial final by identical scores of 5-3 in each of two games.

I would like to acknowledge all of the players for their hard work, dedication, and team effort. They have worked together cooperatively to build a competitive team on local skill, talent, and pride. I would like to congratulate the players for their motivation. It is extremely encouraging for the older generation to see a group of young people with high goals and dreams.

I would also like to congratulate coach, Brad Loshka, assistants, Julius Dziaduck and Louis Korchinski, trainer, Shelden Landstad, and manager, Lorne Matsalla; as well as all of the dedicated parents and fans for their part in making these young people's dream of winning the provincial peewee championship a reality for the second time. Congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Arrival of Spring

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know by the weather out there, spring has arrived.

Spring is an exciting time of year with the bird migration on. A number of birds have already returned, the Canada geese among the first. Marsh hawks are arriving, tree sparrows, slate-coloured Junco, and of course bluebirds. Anybody that has bluebird boxes out are already out cleaning the nest boxes out, readying them for the coming year.

Spring is a time when many plants become active as well, of course. And the crocus buds are already out on the south-facing hillsides.

Soon the whooping cranes will be migrating through Saskatchewan. We have over 200 whooping cranes will be passing through our province this year and that migration will be going through the province within a couple of weeks already.

Certainly this weather is very conducive to people becoming more active as well. Joggers and, heaven forbid, golfers will be out already batting these balls around, competing with the geese for the green lawns. Mr. Speaker, when the weather is great I like to let people know that the Environment minister is responsible for the weather, but if it's bad weather it's a federal responsibility.

Nonetheless we look forward to spring and many more birds returning and many other sights and sounds. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Speed Skater's Record-breaking Performance

Ms. Julé: — At the provincial short-track speed skating championships held on March 21 and 22 in Melville, eight-year-old Ebony Thiel of Humboldt broke the Canadian peewee girls 500-metre speed skating record by smashing the standing record of 1 minute 9.58 seconds with a time of 1 minute 8.21 seconds. Then she broke her own record later the same weekend with a time of 1 minute 6.39 seconds.

Now the week before, while competing at the western regional short-track meet in Moose Jaw, the eight-year-old St. Augustine School student broke the Saskatchewan record in the 500-metre distance as well as two other provincial speed skating records.

Mr. Speaker, Ebony's mother says that Ebony is the fastest female peewee skater in Canada. Congratulations, Ebony; we are all very proud of you and your achievements.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Signs of Spring

Mr. Van Mulligen: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it does my heart good to listen to the member for Indian Head-Milestone. He reminds us that regardless of the noise level within these walls and irrespective of the importance of the issues of the day, which we all know are transitory, despite the fact the member for Kindersley can call a member of his own caucus, "clearly biased and incompetent" and get away with it because of his parliamentary immunity . . . that's page 349 of yesterday's *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker.

Sorry, I got side-tracked. It is good to be reminded that outside these walls the natural world, in the famous and plagiarized words of Prime Minister Trudeau, is unfolding as it should and will continue to do so despite our best efforts to interfere.

Winter is over, spring is here, and I am happy to report that things in the natural world of Regina are unfolding even better than they should or usually do. In the past I have noticed the one sure sign of spring in our town is the sulphurous smell coming off Wascana Lake and as the ice flows go out to sea.

This year, miraculously, the ice is gone and so is the smell, Mr. Speaker. This must be a government decision, Mr. Speaker, and I want to congratulate the member for Regina Centre and her Wascana Centre board for making it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Country Music Awards Night

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Melfort area was well represented at the recent Saskatchewan Country Music Association Awards Night. Our local radio station was recognized in a big way at the Saskatchewan Country Music Association Night. CJVR was awarded the top honours of country music station of the year for the third year in a row.

This honour is presented to the station which displays a commitment to playing Saskatchewan artists along with such things as interviews and public appearances. CJVR was also presented with its fourth consecutive board of directors' selection for radio station award of merit at the president awards banquet.

The station's music director, Cal Granton, was honoured to accept three awards: the music director of the year; on-air personality, and country music person of the year. Shawn Dancy of Star City accepted an award for his band, 'Walking After Midnight'. They were presented with the best back-up band award for their work with Tommy Hunter. Congratulations to these recipients, who represent the talent and commitment of supporting talent all across Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are for the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investment Corporations of Saskatchewan). Well, Mr. Minister, as predicted, the whitewash is on. We can't question the Premier; we can't question the Deputy Premier; we can't question the ministers who were on the SaskPower board; we can't get any of the documents we need. It's a whitewash. It's a cover-up and everyone in Saskatchewan knows it.

The minister likes to quote from the *Leader-Post* editorial page. So let me read a few words of what was in this morning's newspaper:

The NDP government must co-operate fully . . . if requested, past and present senior government officials, including the premier, should appear before the committee and fully answer all questions.

Mr. Minister, what are you hiding? What is the Premier hiding? When is this whitewash going to stop?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member likes to quote from editorials. I have here an editorial from the *Herbert Herald*, March 31. It says “Out on a limb.” And in that column, referring to your actions as it relates to the Channel Lake, it says, and I quote:

The Saskatchewan Party has yet to show any promise that it could be capable of running this province.

Now this is an opinion from rural Saskatchewan. This is an opinion from rural Saskatchewan. I have another one from the Moosomin newspaper, from the Moosomin newspaper that says that you, sir, if that editor had been the Premier, would have taken you across his knee and spanked you because of the way you carry on.

That’s what it says. That’s what the public are saying about you. You are disruptive in the committee. You went there with an attitude to disrupt the committee and that’s what you’re doing. And people call you names because you are that disruptive.

And I say to you, why don’t you go there in a spirit of cooperation, work with the committee, rather than condemning the chairperson here . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, there’ll be spankings handed out all right, and it’ll be in the next election and it’ll be you guys that are getting the spankings.

Let’s just review this NDP so-called investigation of Channel Lake, Mr. Speaker. We have an NDP judge that sits back over there; we have an NDP jury of committee members; we have an NDP legal counsel; and we have an NDP witness list. The only NDP we can’t get is the Premier of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Why? What is it that you are hiding over there? Mr. Minister, will you call off, will you call off your NDP henchmen who are protecting you and the Premier from testifying, or are you going to keep hiding behind your NDP members who are running this little NDP show trial?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, I understand why they put him up on the file because obviously he is the most disruptive of all that caucus. We know that. And we also know why the member from Melfort has baled out on the file.

Just watch with interest how the member from Melfort started asking the questions, failed miserably, and now they have the big disrupter, the big disrupter on the file. I say to the member opposite that you can accuse Mr. Priel of being an NDP or Liberal, but I can tell you it was also brought out in the committee today that he did contracts for the Devine government, for your government, when the Devine government was in power.

Now why don’t you say that? If you’re talking about being truthful, you would say: Mr. Priel donated money to the Liberals; he donated to the NDP; he did work for the Devine government. Be fair and honest and truthful and maybe the system would work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In committee today when we finally did get a chance to speak to Jack Messer, he gave us some very interesting answers. He started pointing fingers and naming names, several of them over there.

He said the board and the ministers responsible for SaskPower were informed of the key events in Channel Lake every step of the way. That includes the illegal move into gas arbitrage, the millions of dollars in . . . (inaudible) . . . losses, and the botched-up sale of Channel Lake and the \$5 million loss.

Mr. Minister, you have constantly told us that you didn’t know what was going on there. Well that’s not what Jack Messer said this morning. Mr. Minister, you knew what was going on all along. Other members of that cabinet knew what was going on all along. The Premier and the full cabinet I’m sure would have been informed of what was going on.

Every one of you that were involved in this file should be handing in your resignations. Will you be doing that today, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, during this process that the member says has no credibility and picks and chooses what’s credible by now pointing out what he says is the credible part of the process, that makes you wonder a little bit about his sincerity and the meaning of his project.

But you should not be surprised, as we go through this process, that you will have differing opinions on a different set of circumstances. That’s what the process is all about.

But if you were to turn to page 22 of the Deloitte Touche report, had you read it, you would have read, and I quote:

Documentation presented to the Board of SaskPower was at critical junctures incomplete to the point where the Board was not being effectively informed . . .

Now you should not be surprised, I say again, if you get different opinions. That’s what an inquiry is about. And so the former Liberal who yells from his chair — now a Conservative — if you have credibility, you should go to a by-election and see if you could get elected as a Conservative.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, you paid Jack Messer \$300,000 to shut up. And today he came to the committee and he started singing like a canary. Every minister, every step of the way, was aware of what was going on — that's what he said. That's what he said before the committee today. They knew about illegal gas trading; they knew about trading losses; they knew about the botched-up sale; and they covered it up — and that includes you, Mr. Minister.

Your whitewash isn't working in Saskatchewan. Jack Messer is singing like a bird for all of Saskatchewan people to hear and there's nowhere left for you to hide. It's time, Mr. Minister, to come clean before the people of Saskatchewan; it's time that you and all of the members involved in this cover-up 'fessed up for the people of Saskatchewan. It's time, Mr. Minister, that you and the members responsible on that cabinet, around that cabinet table, tendered your resignations.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say with all sincerity to the member from Kindersley that if anyone should resign on behalf of their constituencies, it's those people there who in the dark of night deceived the Liberals in their constituencies, the Conservatives in their constituencies, and for political motives, to save your political skins, tried to put together a new arrangement with no consultation with anyone.

As it relates to Channel Lake and the review that is now ongoing, I say to the member from Kindersley, I understand why you are the person on the file — very little finesse, clutching in the corners, putting a stick in here and there — but what you don't have is credibility and that will come out loud and clear.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one wonders . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now — order — all hon. members will recognize that the hon. member from Moosomin is not located very far from the Speaker's chair and I am having difficulty hearing him being able to put his question. I'll ask for the cooperation of all hon. members.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one wonders really where the clutching and interference is coming from in this whole affair. But my . . . I have a further question to the minister responsible for CIC.

Mr. Minister, we thought taxpayers were through paying for Jack Messer. It turns out we're wrong. This morning we learned that SaskPower is paying for Jack Messer's lawyer and a legal secretary. One asks why. Isn't \$300,000 enough to hire his own legal assistant? Mr. Minister, you are the minister for SaskPower. You fired Jack Messer; he no longer works for SaskPower. Why is SaskPower paying his legal bills? How much is this going to cost? And why do Saskatchewan taxpayers have to keep paying for Jack Messer?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say to the member opposite, who is the member from Moosomin where the editorial talked about giving a whopping to a couple of people over there if they had their way, I say to the member

opposite in a serious way, I have checked with my officials at CIC and it's their opinion and my opinion that we are not paying legal bills for Mr. Messer.

I will check it further, but let me check and let me tell you that it's my opinion — as I know it today and I've talked to my officials at CIC — that there will be no monies flowing for legal bills for Mr. Messer unless there is some legal reason that that would have to happen.

But let me tell you this, that as I understand the situation we are not paying legal bills for Mr. Messer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's quite obvious the minister wasn't down at Crown Corps this morning to hear what Mr. Messer was saying, or even what legal counsel was saying.

Mr. Minister, it's totally disgusting. Why on earth should SaskPower be paying for Jack Messer's lawyer? First he loses millions on illegal trading activity; then he loses millions more because he didn't read the contract; then you give him a \$300,000 severance package; and now even paying for his lawyer. How many more times are you and Jack Messer going to slap taxpayers in the face.

Mr. Minister, it's time to end the free ride for Jack Messer. Will you cut off the free legal services he's getting from Saskatchewan taxpayers and tell him to get his own lawyer? Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I think on one topic the member from Moosomin and I just might agree. I think the idea that we are reviewing the issue is the first I hear of it after the committee meeting today that there was anyone suggesting that we would have responsibility for paying legal bills.

I say again, I say again, I have asked my officials at CIC to review the instructions to the legal counsel and if there is any potential that we would be paying legal fees for Mr. Messer, I'll bring that report back. But it is my personal view that we are not and will not pay for legal counsel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Plains Health Centre Closure

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has stated from the outset that the decision to close the Plains hospital was made by this NDP government and this government alone.

During the noon hour, the minister in charge of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) told CTV (Canadian Television Network) news that his department was notified about plans to close the Plains hospital in 1995. We find that strange, because it wasn't until January of 1996 that the Regina District Health Board actually voted on the motion to close the facility.

Will the minister in charge of SPMC now admit that the decision to close the Plains was made long before the issue ever went to a vote of the district board? Will you tell the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan why they were misled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suppose we could spend time quibbling about the date, but the fact is that three decisions of the health boards have been to sustain the decision to close the Plains. And certainly for the last two and a half years SIAST has been in discussion with Sask Property Management about the development of a new and improved learning centre linked to the University of Regina.

We believe that in an age of new technology, two centres of excellence in health, one in education, all the best technology and specialists at both centres, no loss of services, I think these are the kinds of matters that the member should focus on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Costs for Accident Victim

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Christina and Carl Christman of Central Butte are joining us today in the legislature and they're sitting up in your gallery and they're looking for answers from this government.

Christina's mother, father, and brother were recently involved in a car accident. And what followed was a perfect example of NDP bureaucratic buck-passing and bungling at its worst. Larry and Meryl and their son Danny were all seriously injured after a Highways department vehicle hit a huge pothole, jumped over, slammed into the Joel's truck way back in February.

Danny, who is mentally handicapped and is a ward of the court, now requires 24-hour care and nursing care will cost about \$1,700 a week. Mr. Speaker, the Highways department has assumed no responsibility. So Mr. and Mrs. Joel approached the Thunder Creek Health District in search of answers. But the family was told that the district would not pick up the cost; they have no money.

Will the Minister of Health explain why the Department of Health will not pick up the care for Danny's 24-hour care?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, this is now the third case that the member has brought to the House for me to try and reach some consensus of what's happened on an individual case. And I want to say to the member opposite, as I said to him a couple of weeks ago, that my door is open to all people across the province for us to talk about individual issues that might affect them.

I have not had the opportunity to look at this case or discuss this case with — and I believe their names are Christina and Carl — and I would suggest to the member opposite that in the future what he might do is that he might advise my office if he has a circumstance in where there are issues of this nature so that we can sit down and try and resolve it within the bureaucratic

system. This is not the place where you politic with people's lives around very, very serious issues.

And I say to the member opposite, use the appropriate venue so that we can deal with people in the way in which they should be, in dignity and compassion and not in this forum.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If this government was indeed in touch with the people of the province, the people that they're here to serve, we wouldn't have to go through this crisis every time someone has a problem in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Joels couldn't get any help from the Health department so they took their case to Social Services. There they were told because Social Services already provides a group home that Danny resides in with that \$800 a month, they shouldn't expect any help from this department.

Will the Minister of Social Services explain why his department will not assume responsibility and ensure that Danny has the 24-hour care that he needs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, with the Minister of Health, I and certainly officials of my department would be glad to sit down with the family to discuss their circumstance. That would be, Mr. Speaker, the appropriate, the appropriate means by which we try to solve individual problems in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage that member, and in fact all members in the opposition, if we are truly interested in the interest of this family, or any family in our province, our doors are open. Our phones are connected. Let us know. We'll do our best to help.

We shouldn't have to engage in this highly politicized atmosphere to bring these cases forward, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've heard a commitment from two ministers so far today that will meet with these folks after. We'll go for one more. We've got one more loop in this.

Mr. Speaker, the Joels were then referred to SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), which agreed to pick up \$570 of the weekly costs, which is well short of the total cost. The Joels were then told by SGI that they should go back to Social Services or the Department of Health; that perhaps those departments might help.

When does the run-around stop, Mr. Speaker? At this point the family doesn't care what government department picks up the cost. The only thing they want is this government to stop passing the buck, stop running them through this bureaucratic nightmare.

Will the minister of SGI, along with the Minister of Social Services, and the Minister of Health, and the Minister of

Highways, the minister whoever, and the Premier, all agree to meet with these folks afterward and stop their nightmare?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated to the member opposite that my office would be more than pleased, as we are on every occasion, to meet with individuals who are having difficulty, as the member points out, in dealing with the bureaucracy, if that's the case. Now I say to the member opposite and to the folks who are here today, that we would be more than pleased to have that discussion with them on an individual basis.

Now the member opposite has said some other things that are important to note here. He said that the individual was already a ward of the court, and in an environment where he was being cared for, I understand, likely through the Department of Social Services.

The member opposite also talks about services that they tried to receive through SGI and it sounds like received some services in compensation through SGI. And the member opposite also talks about health coverage that's being provided today through the health system, which I think is appreciative of the comments that he makes in terms of the services that are provided through those three organizations and departments, and corporations.

And I say to the member opposite and to the people who are listening today, we would be more than happy on any occasion to sit down with individuals and deal with issues that are in the way, if they are, and helping them improve their quality of life for benefiting the situations that they live in, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, when I asked the Premier a couple of weeks ago if it was true that he had intervened to prevent Doug Anquish from firing Mr. Messer, he told us he couldn't remember. Well today I asked Mr. Messer if it was true that he had a contract of employment which provided for his termination and severance, and J.R. couldn't remember that.

Well the Liberal opposition has learned that according to the contract of employment as CEO (chief executive officer) of SaskPower, he was to be paid severance at the rate of two days per year for service up until 1996 and five days for every year thereafter. That totals 15 days severance he was entitled to according to his contract of employment.

Will the Deputy Premier confirm that was the contract and tell us why that wasn't followed when there was in fact a contract in place. Was Mr. Garden aware when he gave his opinion that there was a contract in place covering termination?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that I don't have the contract here with me. And what I will intend to do, as your committee progresses, try to make sure as clearly as we can to provide the information as

it relates to this issue and others. I say to the member obviously there is a circumstance here.

And I want to reiterate to him, because I've talked about this a number of times in the House — as members questioned me on the issue of Channel Lake and Mr. Messer's severance — that when we came to the point of parting ways, the decision on whether or not to pay severance was given over to Milt Fair, who we said clearly should have the responsibility, without political interference from myself or from any other member of the CIC board, to come to the conclusion as to whether or not severance was applicable; and if so, how much should be paid.

In fact that is the plan and the process that was followed. Mr. Milt Fair, in conjunction with legal advice, came to the conclusion that severance — given the parameters, reviewing the file in all its detail — should be paid. The payment was made on a legal basis, not a political one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier has admitted on more than one occasion that, in answer to questions I put to him in December, he misled this House. He has said on repeated occasions, he did that in good faith on the basis that he himself was misled. Well he said that he hadn't gotten the true, full, and honest story from SaskPower officials, and he has apologized to this House.

Well today J.R. told us that he had, at all times, kept the minister fully informed of all developments regarding Channel Lake — he held back nothing. When I last raised this, the Deputy Premier said I was it raising because of politics. This is not because of politics; this is an issue of the most basic integrity and credibility. Who is telling the truth?

Mr. Messer says he kept you informed; you knew the truth; you knew the full facts. You are telling us you were not kept informed and that's why you misled this House. Which is it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member clearly knows, if he has read the Deloitte Touche report — and being a member of a law firm in North Battleford, I'm sure he has the confidence and capability — you will know that the Deloitte Touche report deals very directly with the issue of briefing notes as it would relate to the December session of the legislature.

You know that; don't you know that, Mr. Member from North Battleford? You know it's in the report. You know it's in the report. You know that. For you to say that you don't know what's in the report is not telling the truth here in the Assembly. And I say to you, you're misleading the House when you make that accusation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order, order. Now the hon. member will ... the minister will recognize that accusations about the characters of members in this House is not acceptable and I will ask him to withdraw that last remark.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that remark, and I would ask the member opposite who made the same accusation to do the same.

The Speaker: — Order. I asked the minister just to withdraw the remark without qualification. I ask the minister to withdraw the remark.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I make it in unqualified form.

The Speaker: — Next question.

Tax Relief

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, I hope that you took note of the polling results in today's *Leader-Post* on your budget. What a revealing number. Only 23 per cent — 23 per cent, Mr. Minister — of Saskatchewan people think you got it right.

Just in case you didn't get a chance to read the paper, let me remind you one more time why people weren't happy with this budget — because there was absolutely no meaningful tax relief. You keep telling the people of Saskatchewan that they're better off because of all the sacrifices they've made.

Mr. Minister, your government may be better off, Jack Messer may be better off, but the people of Saskatchewan certainly aren't better off. When are you going to start listening to the people of Saskatchewan and provide meaningful tax relief?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member read the poll in today's paper actually what the member would have seen is that there's broad public support for the balanced approach we're taking of continued lowering of taxes, reducing debt, and investing in people.

What the poll said, Mr. Speaker, was there's no clear preference for any of the options presented. In fact opinion was roughly evenly split. If for example we had focused exclusively on tax cuts rather than trying to pay down the debt and do more in health and highways and education, as we are, 70 per cent would have disagreed with that approach, Mr. Speaker.

And I think the poll is well summed up by professor Joe Garcea of the University of Saskatchewan, who says, "... the results confirm the government is on the right track with its overall strategy."

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, with paying down the Conservatives' debt, reducing some of the taxes brought in by the Conservatives — that's the agenda we're on — that's an agenda I think, Mr. Speaker, that the people will support.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — In keeping with government policy to be open, accountable, and responsible, Mr. Speaker, I hereby am

pleased to table question 18.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 18 is tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Gantefoer.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my remarks this afternoon, I'm going to focus on the occupational health and safety program of the Department of Labour. I do that, Mr. Speaker, because during the whole of 1997, we recognized in many different ways the fact that the occupational health and safety program of the department is 25 years old. The program was established in 1972, and in 1997 we marked — in various ways, as I say — the birthday, the anniversary, the 25th anniversary, of the occupational health and safety program.

I thought I'd take a few moments today to remind the House where we were at prior to 1972, what happened in 1972, and the significance of those developments so far as our province is concerned.

Prior to 1972 the functions that relate to the safety and health of people who work, were spread across government in a rather haphazard way. The Workers' Compensation Board had for many years had responsibility for accident investigation and accident prevention.

And they had a staff that was ... worked within the bureaucracy of the board who had been performing that function for probably as long as there had been a Workers' Compensation Board.

The department, what is now the Department of Energy and Mines, had responsibility for mines inspections, and they carried out their inspections without any contact with the Workers' Compensation Board staff. It was a separate function of government. The Workers' Compensation people stayed away from the mines and the mines inspectors of course focused only on the mines.

In addition to that, the Department of Health had a general responsibility for healthy working conditions everywhere in the province, and that included the health of working people while they were working. And beyond that there was really nothing, Mr. Speaker, nothing in the law that protected our people as they went to their jobs, worked with their jobs in the province.

What happened in 1972 was that the new Blakeney government, after a quick but thorough investigation of the situation, decided to draw all those pieces together — draw them all together into one department, and they did that. They did that by establishing the occupational health and safety division in the Department of Labour, by transferring a lot of

the people who worked in other departments into Labour, and combining them into the one program.

And at that time, the Blakeney government passed the occupational health Act, The Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1972.

This Act was introduced into this legislature by a former minister of Labour, Gordon Snyder. Gordon Snyder had been the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Moose Jaw from 1960 and he held that position until 1982. For 22 years he was in this legislature, the last 11 of which saw him as the minister of Labour in the Blakeney government.

I had the honour, Mr. Speaker, to work as the deputy minister under Gordon Snyder for five of those years. And I want to say publicly that I have never seen a minister of the Crown conduct his duties with such conscientiousness as Gordon Snyder.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Gordon Snyder had been a union man all of his working life. He'd worked for the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway). He was a locomotive engineer. And he believed with every fibre of his being that working people are best off if they have the protection of a collective agreement and the protection of a trade union acting on their behalf.

And he also brought the experience of all those years on the tools, Mr. Speaker, where he actually was out there on the job being subjected to all of the dangers that can confront a worker during the course of their employment.

As a locomotive engineer he had worked in a noisy environment, for example, and that had an impact on his hearing. He was always concerned about the fact that his hearing was not as sharp as he would like it to have been. And there was no question that his employment related to that.

So during his years as minister of Labour, he always paid particular attention to the audiology part of it, the hearing testing, and the dampening of noise in the work environment so that people's ears were not affected. Where there was a noisy environment, some kind of protection had to be worn, and he was always particularly conscious of that. So he'd been there, Mr. Speaker.

And he introduced in 1972 the new Act which has been in effect since. There've been a number of improvements and modifications to it, but it provided the framework under which we still work.

It was, Mr. Speaker, a radical change to the law of this province. I have already mentioned that it brought the administration of occupational health and safety matters under one roof. But that in itself is not particularly radical because there are other provinces that have done that since.

What was radical though were some of the provisions in that Act. And probably the most important was it conferred on working people the right to participate in the occupational health and safety questions in their plant. And it did that by requiring every plant where there were 10 or more employees to

establish a joint occupational health committee.

The committee was under the Co-Chair of a management representative and a worker representative, and the committee consisted of an equal number of workers and representatives of management. And that structure, Mr. Speaker, has not changed. That continues to this day. But it was a radical change in the law of this province, and indeed in the law of any jurisdiction in Canada.

What it did, Mr. Speaker, was take the responsibility for the administration of safety out of the hands of government bureaucracies and placed it into the hands of the people who actually worked in the plant. The managers and the workers working together were given the responsibility and the power to identify problems, to analyse those problems, to seek advice with respect to those problems, and to solve them.

And for the last 25 years, Mr. Speaker, it's worked, at plants, working places all across this province. The people who worked there, meeting at least once a month, have been busy about the task of making their workplaces healthier and safer. And it has worked, Mr. Speaker, as I will demonstrate later in my remarks.

I mention the right to participate — a very important right — and the workers do it through the occupational health committees. In subsequent years, two other rights were introduced into the Act. I want to spend a moment describing those rights.

The first one to appear was the right to refuse to do dangerous work. That was introduced into the legislation in this province just a few years after the Act was passed, still under the Blakeney government and the administration of Gordon Snyder. The right to refuse to do dangerous work. One would think that that right should have existed ever since there's been work in this country. But the fact is that nobody thought of it; nobody thought to put it into the law that a working person has the right to say, I won't do it because it presents too great a danger to me. It presents a danger of taking my life or injuring me.

(1430)

Now the working people now go to work and they know about this right, and I know that they think that that right has always been there. And I take advantage of every opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to remind them that prior to 1972 they had no such right.

So if the employer said, go down in that ditch, the employee went down in the ditch or stood a risk of losing their job. And of course it happened time after time after time that refusals led to terminations on the spot for insubordination.

And it wasn't until 1972 that an employee could say, I won't go down that ditch because it's going to collapse. There are no supports holding up the sides of the ditch. There's no slope to the ditch, and I won't go down there because if that ditch collapses, I'm going to die.

Now that right was conferred in 1972, and I'm glad to say, Mr. Speaker, that the number of times in which refusals have taken place have been many, many indeed. And that has saved the

lives of countless number of working people. And I think we should all be proud of that because that right was born on the floor of this legislature and has been part of the law of Saskatchewan ever since.

Other provinces, seeing what Saskatchewan had done, picked it up. The federal government, seeing it was done here, picked it up and introduced it into their laws. And so now it is a common right across Canada that employees have the right to refuse to do dangerous work. And if they refuse, they can't be terminated or they can't be penalized in any way.

The third right that is a little more subtle, but none the less extremely important, is the right to know. And that right was also introduced near the end of the term of the Blakeney government. And by the right to know, Mr. Speaker, I mean that an employee has the right to know what he or she is working with.

If they're using a chemical in connection with some process in the plant and they're breathing the fumes or getting it on their hands, they have a right to know what chemical that is — what it's composed of, what are the effects of that chemical, and whether or not it presents any danger to their health and safety.

Now that's a subtle right but a very, very important one. And it has led to an opening-up of the process so that it's commonplace now for an employer and all the people working in a plant to get on top of the question of a new chemical before it starts to be used; so that they're certain before it starts to be inhaled or starts to be absorbed by their skin, they know what it is and they know what the possible consequences are — they know whether or not it's safe. And as a result, in recent years we have not had chemicals introduced into the workplace before this kind of research takes place. Everyone's aware that the right exists, everyone respects it, and we have had no particular difficulty in that area for some years now.

Those three rights really form the muscle of the Act because they are so fundamental to the health and safety of working people. And our kids go to work now assuming that these things have always been there, and I think it's well for us to reflect on the fact that that wasn't always the case, but that due to the foresight of people like Gordon Snyder, those rights now exist and are now taken as a matter of fact.

I mentioned Gordon Snyder. I should also mention my predecessor in the office of deputy minister, who is Don Ching, who served for nearly three years in that position and was there to oversee the drafting of The Occupational Health and Safety Act and do the staff work, do the background work that was necessary for the government to act.

Another person that just must be mentioned, another person who must be mentioned, Mr. Speaker, is Bob Sass. Bob served as the director of that division and associate deputy minister of the department for many years and breathed life — breathed life — into this program; dramatized its contents and elevated its profile to a very high level. And Bob's contribution to this program simply has to be recognized and I'm proud and pleased to be able to recognize it today.

I have said, Mr. Speaker, that other jurisdictions copied the

right to refuse dangerous work. I should expand that to say that the whole scheme of the Act has been much studied by jurisdictions across the country and indeed across the world. And features of the Act find their . . . have found their way into the legislation of all jurisdictions in Canada and in many jurisdictions in the United States and in Europe.

The drafters of this legislation and the people who conceived of the ideas should take great pride in the fact that they built something that not only has lasted but has been much copied. Imitation, Mr. Speaker, is the sincerest form of flattery, and in that respect the drafters have been much flattered.

We have tried over the years to keep the Act and the regulations up to date. And members will recall that in 1993 the legislation was recast in this legislature. There followed an extensive process of consultation with employer and trade union and worker groups to prepare regulations under the Act, and those regulations were promulgated some year and a few months ago.

They were the product of this consultation process which we look back on now with great pride, because it achieved a level of consensus with respect to the content of those regulations which had never been achieved before. And it . . . in effect, everybody bought into it. And as a result, the regulations are off to a good start with a broad understanding of what they contain. A good deal of education going on about their content and a very high level of compliance with the new regulations.

The program, Mr. Speaker, is the flagship of this government so far as workers' rights are concerned, so far as the position of working people is concerned in this province. And all of us take a great deal of pride in it, a great deal of interest, as I know members opposite do as well.

I said, Mr. Speaker, that it has worked and I want to just cite three statistics to demonstrate the fact that it has worked: fatalities last year compared to 25 years ago showed a drop of 48 per cent; claims made on Workers' Compensation last year showed a 25 per cent decrease from the number of claims 25 years ago; time-lost claims were down last year 27 per cent compared to 25 years ago. And all of those improvements can be laid at the doorstep of The Occupational Health and Safety Act. I think all members of this House can take great satisfaction in that and in the work of our predecessors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The work is not finished, Mr. Speaker; much, much remains to be done. This is a huge problem for our society. Notwithstanding how the program has worked and the improvement that has taken place, problems still exist out there, and they are big, expensive problems. They cost a lot of money to our economy. They cost a lot of money to employers, they cost untold damage and inconvenience and hardship to the people who are hurt or become ill.

I just want to cite one example and that is the construction industry. And I cite this to give members some idea of the measure of the problems that workplace accident and sicknesses result in. The numbers are really quite staggering.

We have obtained through the Workers' Compensation Board

information about the construction industry between 1980 and 1990. And during those 10 years the Workers' Compensation Board paid out more than \$230 million for accident-related costs in the construction industry alone — \$230 million. Now with the indirect cost factored in, so far as the industry is concerned, the total cost of those accidents was at a minimum \$1.3 billion.

That's the advice that I get if you consider not just the Workers' Compensation costs, but the other costs, that are related to that, to our society. And the total costs over those 10 years are therefore likely to be in excess of \$10 billion.

In that 10-year period, the 1980s, the construction industry lost over 6,000 person-years of work due to accidents. That's the equivalent of 150 lost lifetimes of work. And that's just one industry — that's the construction industry. It's a dangerous industry but not the most dangerous. But it does demonstrate clearly what the problem . . . that what kind of a problem is presented by unsafe and unhealthy working conditions.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget contains provisions to strengthen our role in the operation of the health and safety system in this province. Just want to just remind you, and I've mentioned this before in these remarks, but remind you that the system is largely a self-governing system. The occupational health committees are the front-line troops in identifying and dealing with the dangers that exist at the workplace. And when they need help, when they need advice, or when they need the force of the law to deal with a dangerous situation, they come to the department. But primarily the responsibility lies with the committees.

So we see our role as, in large part, supporting the committees — supporting the committee members, ensuring that they can exercise their responsibilities under the Act without any discrimination and without any worry about whether they're entitled to do that. We try and support them in every way that we can.

We are in this budget devoting additional resources to this end. We will have . . . members will know that there is a budgetary increase for the department, of a considerable size. There are new positions being allocated in the department. There will be two new mine inspectors, and there will be additional resources within the occupational health and safety division, which we will concentrate on accident prevention, on accident prevention and education with respect to workplace dangers.

I'm very pleased that in these times of difficult government financing, our government has found it possible to substantially increase expenditures relating to the health and safety of working people.

What it's all about, Mr. Speaker, is work. When you get right down to it, what it's about is work. Work is at the centre of the lives of all people in our society. It's how we identify ourselves — the great pressure from the society for everybody to work and to contribute and to earn. Our whole society is set up on the premiss that everybody has good, full-time, well-paid jobs.

And when people are unemployed, this society makes a considerable effort to get them back into the workforce. And it

only makes sense, Mr. Speaker, that in those circumstances we do everything we can to ensure that that work is safe, and that that work is not unhealthy; so that people can enjoy a full working life earning a good income to keep themselves and their families without unnecessary risk to their life and to their limb.

Nothing is as important to all of us as our own health, and that has a great value that for most people exceeds money — exceeds their own wealth and exceeds their concern about how much they make. Our health and the health of our family is uppermost in our mind. And as legislators we owe it to our society to ensure that work is as safe and healthy as can reasonably happen, as can reasonably be achieved.

People are people, Mr. Speaker. They're not units of production; they're not just part of a production process. They're individuals. They're our sons and our daughters, our brothers and sisters, our friends and our neighbours. And their health and their safety, their very lives, must never be put at risk in order to speed production, or to enhance profits.

It is the mission of the occupational health and safety division of the Department of Labour to ensure that they are healthy, that the conditions are healthy, that they are safe, and that people are properly protected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time afforded me this afternoon to reply to the budget.

This government should be commended for its attempt, again, in budget '98 to soften the burden of taxes on the people of our province. It should be commended too for its intention to encourage small businesses; but, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's budget '98 makes it easy to fear it is far too little and far too late.

It is again awesome in its elegant presentation of numbers to make what isn't seem to be what is. This budget is a milestone in Saskatchewan's fiscal development. It illustrates more clearly than we've seen for some time three fundamental weaknesses in this government's fiscal management scheme.

First, Saskatchewan will continue at least until the end of the decade to use utility taxes to make the deficits from the government's spending habits look like surpluses — as if the fiscal problems have actually gone away.

What are utility taxes, Mr. Speaker? Well they are rates this government's Crowns charge for services which are over and above what it costs to provide those services, including paying down the Crown debt for infrastructure. They are rates which give the Crown profits which are then transferred over to be used by government departments.

There are two things wrong with this, Mr. Speaker. First, it means that this government has not brought its departmental spending under control. Secondly, utility taxes are astonishingly regressive. There are few taxes that are quite so regressive. The burden of them falls most heavily on low income families, on families with small children, and on small business.

These are the taxes this government uses to make deficits look like surpluses in its budgets and financial statements — to make deficits on its departmental spending into surpluses. And what's more, it is highly unlikely that the two percentage points from the sales tax and the two percentage points from the income tax will offset the deleterious effects of those very utility taxes.

Now, ironic isn't it, Mr. Speaker, and to some it should indeed be embarrassing that what we have in Saskatchewan is a government that claims it is dedicated to protecting and helping those less fortunate. Those who are in low income families and small business, children of low income families. But it gives a little bit with one hand, like redesigned social assistance for children for example, while it takes away much, much more with the other.

It takes away the basic services those families and small businesses need to survive and make a living — heat and electricity and communications. And why? The answer to why is to support its questionable spending priorities.

Now is it not hypocritical to redesign social assistance for children and at the same time commit the government to collecting more and more utility tax revenues which adversely affect their families and the small businesses where their families may otherwise be employed.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, this government should be commended for paying down the debt, the debt it helped create for the people of Saskatchewan. By the end of the fiscal year, the one just ending, 1997-98, it will have reduced the province's total public debt to what it was at the beginning of the decade.

Now let's think about that — what it was at the beginning of the decade. But what really is its debt reduction program? Still a fifth of this government's spending goes to debt service charges, the second largest expenditure item after health care.

And more than that though, in only two of the seven fiscal years from 1991 — pardon me — 1990-91 to 1996-97 did the government pay down more of the provincial debt than what it received from borrowing.

Now let me say that again, Mr. Speaker, because I don't think a lot of people actually understand this. The government, okay, the government — in only two of the last seven fiscal years did the government pay down more of the provincial debt than what it received in borrowed monies. About half of the debt it paid down in the fiscal year just ending 1997-98 came from borrowed funds. About half of the debt it will pay down in the fiscal year just beginning, 1998-99, will come from borrowed funds.

Now can the people of Saskatchewan be sure this government is winning the debt management battle as it claims. A substantial part of the debt the province is paying off comes from what it is borrowing. It needs its debt to pay its debt. What else is there to say except that its claim to be the province's fiscal saviour is very, very hollow. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we have here a fiscal management scheme in which the people of this province should have very little confidence.

Now thirdly, isn't it curious that the level of spending on almost every program and service provided by this government is now higher than it was at the beginning of the decade. The only exception is in agriculture — is in agriculture. But presumably, and I say presumably, that's because the government's spending in that area now goes to processing.

Now here we have higher levels of spending, but cut-backs in services everywhere. Cut-backs in health care, in education, and our roads. Saskatchewan's spending on health care grew by almost 3 per cent a year on average, that's from 1993-94 to 1996-97. Even a quarter of a per cent a year, on average, from 1991 to 1996-97.

Now let's just ask a very important question. Where has the money gone, Mr. Speaker? Because it most certainly has not gone on to front-line health care; it's not gone into more beds; it's not gone to more professionals who look after the sick. It most certainly is not going to the very things that people see as their priorities.

And who's really doing the counting of these numbers anyway? Are they counting the numbers of administrators who are now there, relative to those who were there in the past, compared to those people where there used to be nurses and now there aren't? And are these the people who are doing the same counting as those who are doing the kind of figuring for who should and should not get severance packages for the work that they do?

It hasn't gone into our classrooms either, Mr. Speaker, where our children are supposed to be getting the education they need.

And one other comment that I wish to make on this, and I'd be remiss not to comment on this, are about federal-provincial transfers. They are a weakness in this government's fiscal management scheme. Still some 15 to 20 per cent of Saskatchewan's revenues come from taxing other Canadians and from taxing the people in this province by way of the federal tax system.

Those funds are supposed to be transferred into the province for the administration of government; that's called equalization payment. And for social programs, the Canada Health and Social Transfer. But I ask again, where have they gone, Mr. Speaker? They haven't gone into front-line health care; they haven't gone into more beds; they haven't gone for more professionals who meet the needs of the sick.

By taking tax revenue from other Canadians and by taxing the people of this province through the federal tax system, this government continues its spending habits, spending that any person you ask on the street will say is not meeting their basic needs.

What happens, Mr. Speaker, when other Canadians get tired of underwriting the extravagance and the foolish choices of this government? Of this government's inability to get its spending choices under control? Of its inability to get its revenues into services needed by the people of this province? Front-line health care and education for our young people?

They find a way to ensure that their hard-earned tax dollars can

no longer be used by this government in this kind of priority. Priorities again like bringing pals and buddies to do the jobs they weren't qualified for in the first place and then paying them a bunch of money to clean up after they've messed up.

As for the people of this province who already were sick and tired of paying too many taxes, Mr. Speaker, they left, by the thousands. Not just the thousands, not just thousands, but thousands and thousands and thousands.

Now Saskatchewan people . . . I think we should look at this all relatively. You see, I find that when things begin to actually come home to roost, we get some people commenting, Mr. Speaker. And they come home to roost if we look at trend lines in Saskatchewan, something this government should not want to do because over a long period of time, even from when they took power in 1971, the trend lines aren't too hot, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan people should be wondering if this government is lost in the wilderness of fiscal management. Is it lost in a wilderness of an exceptionally high tax burden on low income families — families with young children and small businesses to support its spending habits. In a wilderness of borrowed funds to pay down its debt. In a wilderness of spending outside the core basic programs and services in health care and education. Of not spending on front-line services for the sick and the young and on health care and education. Budget '98 initiatives are far too little and far too late. More like window-dressing to make what isn't seem to be what is.

Mr. Speaker, budget '98 is embarrassing. It shows as clearly as this legislature has even seen, a government that claims to be the protector of those in our province in need but isn't; to be the quintessential fiscal saviour of our provincial government programs and services but isn't. This legislature really must commit itself to working together to protect the people of our province from good-intentioned fiscal bungling.

Now in 1995 there was a plan. It was called *Restoring Health to Saskatchewan*, Mr. Speaker, and it was all about restoring hope for the future. And budget '98 again shows that this government just can't do it. It continues to make our province a rather pathetic cliché now called "next year country." As it promotes its so-called achievements, it fails to tell us that it has just barely finally managed to bring our province back to where it was in the 1980s before it was elected.

Employment is scarcely more than it was in the mid-'80s and it has been growing at just a fifth of a percentage point since the beginning of the 1990s. Our population, whether people like it or not, is considered from elsewhere to be virtually stagnant. The message that was given in 1995 remains virtually unchanged. And I'm going to quote from it, Mr. Speaker:

Saskatchewan has been called "next year country," a place where opportunity is always over the horizon. For those of us who live and work in this province, we know that these should be times of opportunity. Everyone knows that the agriculture, mineral, and energy abundance of the land, combined with a smart, resourceful, and educated people, should provide opportunities for work and quality of life that are unsurpassed in western Canada and the rest of the world. Saskatchewan should be growing faster with more

jobs and lower taxes. Yet what do we find?

And it goes on to say later:

People wanted a government to live within its means. We wanted an economy that created sufficient jobs to allow our young people to work at home. We expected to see a sense of cooperation and community restored to our society. We wanted hope restored for the future.

And I state, Mr. Speaker, that from this government after seven years we have none of that.

Now much has been said of the business practices and subsequent losses of SaskPower which as we all know, Mr. Speaker, means a loss for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. And I'm going to take this opportunity to make comment on Channel Lake, the Public Accounts Committee, the Crown Corporations Committee, the ringing of the bells in this Legislative Chamber, and the need for a public inquiry. All of these topics relate to the finances of our province and I believe are appropriate to address at this time.

(1500)

The people of our province deserve to know what actually transpired with Channel Lake. They deserve to know if their tax dollars have been used judiciously. Mr. Messer and all of the individuals associated with Channel Lake deserve an unbiased and competent forum in which to explain their actions. Everyone, Mr. Speaker, everyone. The citizens of our province and the people who's names have been so readily bandied about deserve justice.

No one who has ever been a member of either the Public Accounts Committee or the Crown Corporations Committee would define them as unbiased. Some would even question the level of competence. I was fortunate to be member of both in the early first mandate of this government, and I remained a member of the Public Accounts Committee from 1991 through 1997.

I watched over that period of time, partisanship increase; disrespect among NDP members increase for the office of the Provincial Auditor; an increase in the unwillingness of government members to listen to the points of view of others; an increasing arrogance on the part of government members who appeared far more interested in flexing their majority muscle than participating in an all-party committee which in the past had the ability and commitment to fulfil its mandate. One of the proudest times I've ever spent in this Legislative Assembly was on that committee from 1991 to 1993.

Neither the Public Accounts Committee nor the Crown Corporations Committee should be charged with the responsibility of getting to the bottom of this Channel Lake fiasco, Mr. Speaker. The Chair of the Crown Corporations Committee stated public yesterday that mistakes will be made because this is a new experience. Well I contend that an issue of this importance should not be put in the hands of novices, and that all concerned deserve an independent public inquiry conducted by people with appropriate expertise.

Now for those who criticize the cost of an independent public inquiry, I simply say this. How much should justice cost? Complaints by the government rang very hollow indeed about the bell-ringing antics of the official opposition. It was the NDP who out-rang and out-cost anything done to date when they rang those bells for 24 hours a day and 18 days.

If they were so concerned, Mr. Speaker, with costs — if they were so concerned with costs and doing what is right, they could have, along with the cooperation of opposition members, established a reasonable budget for a public inquiry with a targeted timeline for completion, thereby ending the hold-up of legislative business. This would also make the ridiculous expense of televising their version of *Days of Our Lives* from room 10 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now hon. members will recognize why the Chair is on his feet and I know that they don't need to be reminded. But apparently it needs to be said anyhow to be put in the record — that the debate on the budget is not well served by members shouting across the floor at one another and it is deserving of the members taking their . . . Order . . . taking the time to put their remarks on the record if they wish them to be noted. And in the interim I will ask them to accord the courtesy to allow the hon. member for Saskatoon Greystone to continue.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only would this have not cost this Legislative Assembly any extra dollars from business not accomplished here, it most certainly would have made the ridiculous expense of supposedly televising their version of *Days of Our Lives* from room 10 in this building a moot point.

And I'd like to make one final comment on this matter, Mr. Speaker. The citizens who have talked to me about Channel Lake are not only concerned about what really happened, they are not only questioning the severance package given to Mr. Messer, they're asking why it is that an individual with no credentials, or very few credentials to run a company of such magnitude, was hired at \$150,000 a year in the first place.

When placed on the list of other people hired by this administration who also were charged with responsibilities for which they had no expertise, it becomes a damning indictment of this government's approach to stewardship. Whether it was what happened at Casino Regina and Mr. Stengler's questionable severance, or SaskPower and Mr. Messer's, the people of this province know that something is not right.

Now there are few people who articulate what politicians and governments should be better than Vaclav Havel, the Czech playwright who went from imprisonment for subversion to assume the presidency of Czechoslovakia. In his first address at the helm of his country he said, and I quote:

My dear fellow citizens, for forty years on this day you heard from my predecessors the same thing in a number of variations: how our country is flourishing, how happy we all are, how we trust our government, and what bright prospects lie ahead of us . . . I assume you did not propose me for this office so that I, too, should lie to you.

Mr. Speaker, Havel went on to say, our country is not flourishing; that the enormous and spiritual potential of our nation is being wasted. That a country that was once proud of the educational levels of its citizens can no longer speak with the same level of confidence about quality and innovation.

Havel spoke of his observations while flying over his nation and describes some of the serious challenges his people had to face. But it was not the extraordinary problems of poverty, pollution, and joblessness that he could see from the window of his small plane that he stated was their main problem, Mr. Speaker. He said, and I quote:

The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment. We have fallen morally ill because we became used to saying one thing and thinking another. We have learned not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, and to care only about ourselves.

Now if we were to fly over Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and put aside the physical beauty of the prairie landscape, what would we see? Would it be evident that a large number of our small communities are dying; that farms are growing farther and farther apart; that this means that there will be fewer neighbours, fewer towns, fewer people with rural values that have been the defining feature of Saskatchewan strength?

Will we see that our cities are not growing exponentially, that we still don't have an economy of scale in Saskatoon or Regina to compete with even Calgary or Winnipeg. Would we see that our roads are safe, that they're competitive, an environment that is secure. And if we stopped and asked our citizens if they've felt that their Saskatchewan was flourishing, what do you think they would say?

All the rhetoric in the world does not change the fact that this province, our province, is being led by an administration with no vision and little ability to inspire. It is very clear from this budget, from the rampant abuse of patronage, from the need to manipulate rather than show true confidence and courage, that as Havel said, quote: "The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment."

People simply want the truth; they live it every day. They have come to an unparalleled level of disdain and they want more from all of us. And I unhappily state that I have seen little evidence in this Assembly or in this budget to believe that they are going to get it.

And so, Mr. Speaker, while many here call it good politics to make what isn't seem to be what is, I do not. It is simply too costly — economically, ecologically, socially, and humanly. I will not be supporting this government's budget because I refuse to believe that this is the best the Saskatchewan people should accept from its leadership. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise and support the budget speech and the budget of this province. Before I do that I'd like to welcome the pages to this jolly old Assembly and hope they enjoy their existence here for the next few months.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my constituents who have worked very hard during the times of government to help the economy and make sure that the area of the Watrous constituency, from corner to corner, is being developed through regional economic development authorities, through the operational hog barns, small businesses of every description. And I want to acknowledge their efforts in making this province a better place to live and a little more prosperous place in which to live.

I also want to acknowledge the full-time staff and the sessional staff that are here. Of course, Mr. Speaker, without them we would not be able to do our jobs, and so often we overlook the support that is given to this Assembly by those staff. And people sort of focus on the stage that's in here rather than the supporting staff who make it all possible.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to express my personal thanks publicly to the Department of Agriculture and Food. I can certainly say that in terms of working, since I've been the minister over just about two and a half years now, I can honestly say that I'm very, very, very proud and pleased to have that department. There's a bunch of excellent people over there.

And the truth is, a department can make or break a minister, and these people are very conscious of doing the right things for the people of this province, and therefore that does make me look better. I want to acknowledge that their diligence and their expertise and articulate nature is very much appreciated.

And, Mr. Speaker, to you I want to say that I know you've been out in the country talking to people — talking to people, talking to students basically in schools. And I've had the opportunity to share that with you in a couple of occasions and I want to say thank you for that. And I'm going to steal a little bit of your speech to make a point.

In this world we have seen the change in attitude for people in democracies, how they respect and disrespect their government. We've seen it for self-centred reasons, political people undermining themselves, undermining their own integrity sometimes to achieve a point, therefore the end justifies the means.

I think we see students in the schools today who are disillusioned with that, who don't know what political life is all about and what politics actually means. You give the example, Mr. Speaker, in your speech, that there are two enemies of democracy. And I, having heard you say that, think about this a lot: apathy and ignorance — ignorance and apathy. And in a section of your little talk where you talked about a democratic system electing Adolph Hitler, until I heard you say that I didn't really realize the importance of those words — ignorance and apathy.

I commend you for going out and reaching out to the students of this province to try to reinstate in them what is absolutely necessary to maintain this Chamber and the debate in this House, and that is knowledge gathered to be sifted through your personal knowledge filter, or your personal filter, so you can express your views and then the ability to express that view, and not saying, it doesn't matter to me.

I really think that's something that you should be proud of. I know it's a start and a long step, long road to make sure that the people and the students of this province respect this institution, and maybe we can build that up again, which is absolutely so necessary.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, I think there is a new politics today, a new politics in this province, in governments not just in Saskatchewan but across the piece. A politics that says if you've done something wrong just say you've done something wrong and apologize and continue on doing the best. Because as people we all make mistakes, every one of us. And if we admonish those people who make mistakes for one mistake, we are not living up to our role of respect and courtesy to others, because we all make mistakes, and the person who doesn't make a mistake I don't think exists.

And we have done that, Mr. Speaker, in terms of trying to spotlight the things that have happened in this province, and I use Channel Lake as the example. Were there mistakes made? Well we'll see as it unfolds in the discussion.

We have people from this House who will be able to ask any questions. We will put a spotlight on this issue because it is the new politics, it is the new way to do things, not try to cover. And we expose the problems.

Well the member over there, you know, Mr. Speaker, the lonely member sitting in the corner of the coffin over there, as we square off this — that's sort of, that's a political term — says we had no choice. Of course we had choice.

I can remember his party, I can remember his party who tried to cover up after cover-up after cover-up and where did it end? Where did it end? It ended in the courts of this land with charges. If you can't learn a lesson from that, Mr. Speaker, then you can't learn a lesson. And we should not be trying to cover. So we put the spotlight on.

The problem over there, Mr. Speaker, with the opposition is that there is a little bit of a struggle for power. There's a little bit of a struggle for power in the old Tory Party over there because the new Liberals who came in, they come in and they sort of want to flex their muscles a little bit, and the old Tories who, well, actually they changed their name. You know there's a song about, you can change your number, you can change your name, but they're still the same old Tory Party with the new Liberals in it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe . . . I hear this member in particular speaking from his seat most of the time and when he stands up to say something, he's really got nothing to say. So maybe he should listen for a little bit and he might learn something. And, Mr. Speaker, on the other side, there have been — this is not a personal attack on any member because any member, like I said before, any person has a right to make a mistake. And if the Liberals think that the choice they made was a mistake, that's fine, when they went to the Conservative Party.

If they think it was okay because they made a conscious decision, that's fine too. But don't go out to the public and say

you want to be government and be responsible to the people of this province. Don't try to feign sincerity. We've got . . . and for some of the members over there, Mr. Speaker, it's not a big step. The member for Saltcoats, when he took the plunge into the new Tory Party, it wasn't a big step. He was going home. I know the history of some of the folks. That's fine. That's their decision.

It's a little bigger step for the member from Kelvington-Wadena — a lot bigger step. And it's a big step for the member from Melfort, the member for Melfort who wants to be leader. And can't you see it, Mr. Speaker, and I just marvel at the fact that these people can stand up there and do this, and then go out to the public of this province and say, oh but everything's fine now; we promise we're going to be sincere to you in this sorry party. We promise you that.

Can't you just see the Liberals who went over there, standing up there telling the people, as noted today in the beginning of this session, quotes from two members saying that they were going to be sincere Liberals. Did you see them? I swear to be a Liberal, a whole Liberal, and nothing but a Liberal, so help God. But maybe it was like this. Maybe they had their fingers crossed. I swear to be a Liberal, a whole Liberal, nothing but a Liberal, so help me God, Mr. Speaker.

You can't feign sincerity. You can fool me once — shame on you; fool me twice — shame on me. I don't think the people are going to be fooled twice. This is why you have to have some kind of integrity in a political party.

Mr. Speaker, I won't go on about this, but you can recycle these people and you can reuse these people but I'll guarantee you'll regret it. It's recycle, reuse, and regret.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is the opposition that wants to be government. So let's just have a little look. I heard the member yesterday from Cannington saying that . . . a welfare case. We get \$300-and-some million from welfare from Ottawa. That was the member from Cannington — that's what he said.

Mr. Speaker, this is the same person who supported a party who spent a billion dollars a year in this province more than they brought in and drove the debt up to \$15 billion. And he calls it welfare from Ottawa. Well I'll tell you, the welfare of \$300 million from Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, is less than half of the \$770 million that we pay in interest every year. That's integrity? That's honesty? Well it's a stretch.

Mr. Speaker, that same member in a speech yesterday said that the Government of Saskatchewan had not built into the, into the budget system a reduction for royalties in oil. And that's in *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker, if the member picked up the book, picked up the book of the budget address and on page 56, if he looks up oil, non-renewable resource section, went from \$524 million forecast to \$367 million. That's \$157 million less that's been built into this. And he has the audacity to stand up and say the government didn't do it. Is that integrity, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so.

Mr. Speaker, but let's really look at this, let's really look at the

want-to-be government over there, the want-to-be government. If you add it all up, the dollars that would have been spent in this province, Mr. Speaker, or lost in this province are atrocious. First the Conservatives wanted to sell the Lloydminster upgrader. That's what they're hollering about — sell the upgrader. You know what they wanted us to sell the upgrader for? The same time Alberta and the provincial government and the federal government sold theirs for less than 8 cents on the dollar, they wanted us to do the same thing. We would have returned . . . if we would have listened, if the people of this province would have listened to that caucus over there, we would have got \$20 million for the Lloydminster upgrader.

We sold the old . . . the Lloydminster upgrader just recently, Mr. Speaker, for \$310 million. And they would have sold it for 20. That's \$250 million-plus of gain. And they want to be government to make decisions, economic decisions for this province?

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the Tories over there were hollering about Cameco shares, exactly. What about the Cameco shares? They wanted us to sell the Cameco shares when they were \$18 a share — \$18. They hollered, sell.

Mr. Speaker, this government, through the great good knowledge and graces of a bureaucracy who knows the business, sold for \$73 a share. You know what a difference that is? That is \$500 million difference that this province gained had they . . . because we did it the way we wanted to and not listened to the opposition. Another \$500 million.

We re-worked the Weyerhaeuser deal, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of \$150 million. We reconstructed the Regina . . . the New Grade upgrader, exposure of \$600 million to the taxpayer. Just add them all up.

And this is the Tory caucus over here who's always talking to us about Alberta. Well let's go and listen to Alberta. You should do the same thing in Alberta.

Just on the Lloydminster upgrader that we just sold, the Alberta government sold for \$32 million. They sold it for less than 8 cents on the dollar. That was a \$424 million investment.

Mr. Speaker, the people who want to be government. Well I'll tell you, the people in this province will not stand for that type of irresponsible action. Privatization for the sake of privatization. Just do it. Get it on . . . get on with it. They won't take it and they won't tolerate it, and I predict, Mr. Speaker, they will not accept those people. Because if you can't have integrity, and if you can't have principles of integrity and principles of managing the economy . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There he goes again, Mr. Speaker, the member who can't say anything on his feet but chirps loudly from his seat.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I want to move into some other areas pertaining to agriculture and my portfolio.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things that are happening in this province, and one of them is the CTA (Canadian Transportation Agency) hearings in which the Canadian Wheat Board is challenging the railroads for the responsibility of grain movement for 1996.

Twenty million dollars demurrage is lost — \$20 million in demurrage is lost — and we have to determine who's responsible. We need a system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is going to have everyone who's touching the grain from the farmers in Saskatchewan responsible if they are cause of delay. We do not have that system right now, and in this particular case we're going to say . . . we're going to try to find out.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition says, just get rid of the board. That's the opposition. The Tories just want to get rid of the board.

Let me tell you a little story, Mr. Speaker. We know under the Canadian Wheat Board what demurrage is. We paid \$20 million last year on it. That's when the ships come in and they're not loaded and we have to pay about \$10,000 a day — \$10,000 a day — for that ship waiting there if it's not loaded by a certain time.

But the would-be government over there, Mr. Speaker, says, well just give it to the Wheat Board; put it on the free market, like many grains are now. Well you know how it works if you're going to load a non-board ship. The cost of transportation . . . Because the question you have to ask is, what demurrage is paid on non-board grains? So when you go to find out what demurrage is paid on non-board grains, you can't find out. You know why you can't find out? You can't find out because the demurrage is built into the basis, the basis being the cost of getting the grain from farm to port.

So the basis is like an insurance policy. They build in some basis points and some costs for transportation to cover demurrage. So if the demurrage is accrued, the grain companies are protected because the farmers have paid it, and they pay the demurrage. And guess what if there's no demurrage? They get to keep it. This is the system these people want over here.

And guess what else? If the grain ship clears the port early, they get paid a rate, a daily rate which is equivalent to about half of the demurrage charged for a ship that is there too long. It's about \$5,000 a day but varies a bit. And guess what? If a non-board grain ship clears early, the shipping company pays for that ship clearing early. Guess who gets that money? At least in the Canadian Wheat Board system that money goes back into the pool.

The want-to-be, get-rid-of . . . the government who wants to get rid of the Wheat Board would say no, that's okay; we'll give that to the companies as well. And they say they're the government . . . they want to be government and help rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you — they advocated the Crow gone. They got their way — \$300 million every year out of the pockets of farmers of this province. They want to get rid of the Wheat Board — add \$500 million every year, which is the benefit the board gives us. That's almost . . . That's \$800 million. That's almost a billion dollars every year they would have out of this province.

So what we're saying in transportation, Mr. Speaker, is give Mr. Estey a chance to do his job. Give him a chance to do his job and in the meantime stop all the abandonments. Just stop

them. Unless there's a section of rail where every party — the people who are buying it, the people who are selling it, and other parties — who are agreed to transfer that, that's fine. But stop the abandonment of those other lines.

Because until we get a new system in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will not have an efficient system. We have a situation now where we're deregulating a system. There is tariff-sharing questions; there's competition questions. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, if you don't have competition in a deregulated system the farmers of this province will lose. For every \$10 a tonne they pay in transportation, it takes \$200 million out of this province every . . . now. For every \$10 a tonne, \$200 million is gone out of this province.

We are paying \$32 a tonne roughly where I live, and on the United States side, where they have deregulation with no competition, they're paying \$52 a tonne. That would be another \$400 million out of our system. We cannot tolerate that; we can't operate that way. So you need competition. And, Mr. Speaker, if there is no competition you don't get the best price.

I live in an area where there are a number of potash mines. The potash mine . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, that man is still talking over there. I mean I know there's nobody else; he's the only one on the opposition benches. I don't know where they all are, but I mean he doesn't have to make up for the rest of them.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Now I'm sure that the member realizes that he cannot refer to the absence or the presence of members in the House. I would advise him to leave that out of the statements and continue on.

Hon. Mr. Uphall: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I actually did know that.

Mr. Speaker, back to my point if you don't have competition. The potash corporations in this province have competition in just about every mine because they have two railroads running in. Do they pay demurrage? No. Is their rate equivalent? They are their private rates, but I don't think they're paying any more than we are for grain right now.

But if you don't have that competition — you don't because every elevator doesn't have two railroads into it — and you're deregulating the system, then you better create competition. It's incumbent upon the federal government to create competition through the use of joint running rights, where any railroad can buy grain from any point and move their train across the tracks to the port.

And, Mr. Speaker, the system has to be built such that those joint running rights will be of benefit to the producers. We have a report, and the railways don't disagree with this . . . well maybe they don't disagree with it. I want to tell you that in 1992 there was a report done for the National Transportation Act Review Commission entitled: "Rail Competitive Lines."

In this report they used a quote from a May 1990 application from Unitel to the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) who was asking permission to use other telephone companies' infrastructure for their calls.

In other words they were applying for joint running rights in the telephone system. Now Unitel's position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was, and I quote:

That competition between it and other telephone companies will result in lower prices, greater innovation, more responsive service for telecommunications users.

That was the position. And that's happening.

(1530)

Mr. Speaker, guess who owns 60 per cent of Unitel shares — Canadian Pacific Railroad, CP. Now if it's good to have deregulation and joint running rights in the telephone company when they owned 60 per cent of Unitel, what's wrong with joint running rights in the rail system?

Now I would agree with them here, but somehow when it comes to the rail, they don't want to do it. And you know what, Mr. Speaker, I know why they don't want to do it. And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't blame them. CNCP's (Canadian National and Canadian Pacific) job is to do the best job that gets the highest return for their shareholders that they can get. That's their responsibility.

And if the government of this country — the federal Liberals in Ottawa — allow them to do that, they will do it. If we deregulate without re-regulating competition, they will collect all the money they can for their investors because that's their job. You can't be mad at the railroads; they're being allowed to do it. That's why we as people in Saskatchewan — as governments, as producer organizations and individuals — have to lobby and lobby hard to ensure that the federal government gets the message. You re-regulate the system at your own peril.

Because it's the same thing with anything else, same thing with the Canadian Wheat Board demurrage. If there's no responsibility from the people who are causing a change then the people who are in that change are going to suffer. We've got the federal government allowing the railroads to deregulate. No responsibility. Who's paying? Taxpayers and the farmers.

We've got grain companies putting their system out of terminals around this province with really no responsibility, because who's building the roads? — the taxpayers, the farmers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it doesn't matter if it's in a Canadian Wheat Board or if it's in grain transportation. If you don't have some buy-in, some responsibility by those people who are affecting the system and touching the system and using that system, then you don't have any responsibility.

You need to put them . . . encumber them with responsibility. And that is the federal government's job in this country, and they are falling down flat on their face because they're allowing this massive change without any risk-taking, any responsibility for it.

And this massive change is doing one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker — it's providing for a tremendous tax shift from the federal government to the provincial government. They took

away the Crow of \$320 million. They're allowing deregulation and abandonments. All this money is coming out of the pockets of Saskatchewan producers and Saskatchewan taxpayers.

The federal government has a responsibility, Mr. Speaker. That is what we're going to be saying to them over and over and over again and we're going to be presenting on April 21 in Calgary to Mr. Estey, in saying a number of these things to impress upon him the need for responsibility in the system, to impress upon him the need for regulating competition if competition doesn't occur naturally.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are going to do that and we're not going to let up until we achieve what we have to achieve. And that is a system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in which the grain from my farm can run unencumbered across those lines at the best price, which would be the competitive price; a grain which can then be hauled into a ship-port system where demurrage is not paid or is paid by those people who cause the delay and by nobody else.

It's really nice right now when anybody in this transportation system can cause a delay and pass the cheque onto the farmer, the bill onto the farmer. That's a pretty nice situation to have; it's deplorable that the federal government would allow this to continue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make one more point on this issue, and that is the point about tendering at port. This is becoming kind of a cog, a catch-word now. Well the Wheat Board, it's okay, it can stay there, but we should really let them sell the grain just to the port; they should have nothing to do from the farm gate to the port.

Well isn't that a lovely situation. That's another way of killing it. Because if I sell the grain before the tenders are called, then the grain companies are going to know that they've got me, because I've got to get the grain to that port, so they can dicker with the price.

If I tender the grain before the sale, then the buyer's going to know, well I'm going to get that . . . that the grain's tendered; it's going to be at the port. He can sit back and juggle the price because he knows the grain's going to hit the port, it's going to be blocked solid, and then he can bargain for a lesser price.

The Kraft-Tyrchniewicz-Furtan study, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, showed that there was almost \$6 a tonne gained from the Canadian Wheat Board being able to organize the system. And I talked about the demurrage. I talked about demurrage. And what would happen is, if we went to that kind of a system, the basis would be increased. Because guess who then would be in . . . self-insuring themselves to make sure that they didn't have a cost if that grain didn't get there. It would be the grain companies. And the farmers again are going to pay.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the right system. This is not the right system, and putting the Wheat Board as a seller at port position simply will mean the end of it. The proponents of tendering at port have not demonstrated this will improve the service, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you why. We know the car turnaround for non-board grain is greater than car turnaround for board grain.

And there are a number of other points that can be made on this, but I wanted to just put this on the record — that if we go to a point of tendering at port, simply the Canadian Wheat Board will not have the ability to organize the system, to have the grain hit the ship when the ship comes in. Because you start the grain moving from the farm. You move it through the system. Same time you start moving, but before that you order the ship. The ship takes 30, 40 days, sometimes 60 days, 50 days to get in. It's got to hit the same time.

If you don't have them in some kind of control of organizing that system, Mr. Speaker, the system will not work. And every time the system doesn't work we know who pays for it — it's the producers and ultimately the taxpayers of this province. Mr. Speaker, I ask people, please forget about that concept because simply it's another diversion to try to kill the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. Speaker, there are some great stories to tell in agriculture in this province. We have tried to lead the way, lobbying for transportation, lobbying for support of the board, reorganizing the marketing systems for hogs, looking at a chicken industry and the beef industry to see what we can do there, and especially livestock, and it goes on.

One of the most important things I think we have done though, because a lot of our producers still produce grain and grain only, is recognize that input costs are a major factor. Input costs are one of the largest factors in this province and that's why I took this to the federal-provincial table two years ago and we will be getting a report hopefully this summer from the working committee to see if there's anything that governments can do collectively to keep input costs down.

Now as the free market system, Mr. Speaker, we can't put price controls on. But certainly we can act as some kind of a watchdog in some process to ensure that there's no gouging or price fixing or anything else that's going on. In Saskatchewan we address this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by doing one thing I think, by doing something that is the only sustainable reduction in input costs in this province.

Over two years we reduced crop insurance premiums by 33 per cent. The only sustained reduction of input costs in the province, Mr. Speaker. I am very, very proud to say that this government, through the Department of Agriculture, has been able to accomplish that. We've taken off the \$11 big game hunting fee, and moved to a system where 85 per cent of the coverage in the field comes from our government. And the farmers are going to get paid for grain that's laying in the fields.

Mr. Speaker, input costs are very important and we're going to lead that battle. But that battle won't be won simply by reducing input costs by government. It takes many more players. And what I have come to realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that over the years there is one way to maintain your farm. And there is only one way, and that is to maintain that farm by farming within the margin that you receive.

The price of grain is nearly irrelevant, because we see as it goes up and down the input prices go up and down. So if you don't work within that margin, you won't be surviving. And the question is, how long can we do that. And the question

becomes, is it not true that your ability to maintain your operation is directly proportional of your ability to capitalize your operation.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people out in the rural areas today who are having difficulty in the grain sector because of input costs and because the prices are down. We have to address this issue. We simply can't just not talk about it because if we don't talk about it and don't address it, the system is going to change. And I'll tell you what it's going to change into. It's going to change into a corporate system where you'll have land trading and farms trading on the ABC land company on the Toronto and Chicago stock exchanges.

We don't want that. So how do you prevent that. You prevent it by addressing and taking the issue head-on. You talk about what alternatives we have. Is it custom farming? Is it leasing? Is it corporate farming or is it new generation co-op farms?

And that is something, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to look at. I'm going to take a moment here to outline a possible project that we should be looking at in this province. If you had 10 or 15 farmers together and they sold all their machinery and put their land into a new generation co-op and have that land capitalized by the money that they sold their machinery for — and I'll bet you you'd have money left over — each one of their acres would be a share in that co-op and they'd have to sell their grain to that co-op and that grain would market it for them. And you'd have to hire a manager because in today's world you need managers. And then they can be the board of directors.

We have examples of new gen co-ops all over . . .

An Hon. Member: — Corporate farming is what that is.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well the member over in the opposition benches says that's corporate farming.

An Hon. Member: — That's the same thing.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well he says the same thing. And I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it may be, but let me tell you the difference.

The difference between corporate farming and new gen co-op farming is that when your land, Mr. Member, is traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange I know who's getting the best result out of it. It's the people who hold the shares in that land.

If a new generation co-op is operating in Saskatchewan with Saskatchewan farmers being the board of directors and voters, I know who is getting the benefit out of that corporate farm or co-op farm. It's the people of Saskatchewan. And that's the difference between those benches over there and these benches here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — So, Mr. Speaker, the member over there tries to . . . He's got a black crayon and he's got a white crayon, Mr. Speaker, but he's living in a grey world. And his black crayons and white crayons don't work in a grey world. Because you always have to compromise and manoeuvre and manipulate

and make sure your farming organization fits the bill so that you can maintain yourself. Manipulating your farming operation to be as profitable as possible is done better through a cooperative system than it is through a corporate system that drains that profit out of this province or this country.

(1545)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — So we have to learn to work within the margin and I think there are some things I think we can do, Mr. Speaker. But most importantly, and what I'm trying to do, is get the conversation going; we have to talk about this in rural Saskatchewan. Why? Because we can't continue the way we are.

If you sit at a railway crossing watching a hundred-car unit train go full of grain to the West Coast, you're looking at, within three minutes of that passing you by if it's going full speed, \$320,000 approximately in one little train. Farmers' money. A hundred-car unit train going for three minutes across the crossing, you've just watched \$320,000 farmers' money going by you — just in freight.

Understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that every week an average of 5,000 cars are unloaded in Canada, most of them at the West Coast — that's \$16 million a week of transportation costs out of Saskatchewan. And these are the people over here who want to change this system and to deregulate it.

Well it's not a black-and-white world, Mr. Members-Over-There, it's a grey world and you've got to be able to work in that world. And you don't do it by saying just deregulate, it will take care of itself. It's not possible.

So we've got though that \$320,000 every train load going out of this province. What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is keep that money here. You keep that money here . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There he is, that member — I'll tell you he talks a good game from his seat but when he gets up I'll tell you there's a void.

Mr. Speaker, you've got to keep that \$320,000 here and you do it by diversifying. We've done it with this government by working in partnerships, by investing in the people of this province. Working in partnerships in the hog industry, pork central, a unit that works with the hog people by taking tax off intensive livestock operations, give the people a little bit of an advantage.

We have worked with the bison industry. We've worked with the elk industry. In fact on Saturday night I was at the elk annual meeting in Saskatoon. That was the largest . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Now the hon. member from Watrous has as much right to put his views on the record as anyone else and anyone else will have the right to do so when he is finished. Right now the hon. member for Watrous has the floor and I would ask him to continue.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have broadened our base. Elk — 500, over 500 people have an annual meeting

in Saskatoon. The largest meeting of the elk industry in Canada except for the North American in Edmonton, where there are 700. We've gone from 20 herds of elk in this province, in permits, to 300 in 10 years. It's a tremendous growth in that industry.

And we have to continue doing that, with bison, with spices, with chickens, with beef, with specialty crops, all of those. We have to build on the great infrastructure we have like the Prairie Swine Centre, the Beef Development Centre, the Co-op Development Centre, VIDO, which is the Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization that is leading, world-leading technology on animal serums, preventing disease.

We have to build on those things that we have in this province. The biotech centre, which is going to allow us to be more flexible — because everybody's on our tail. They're trying to build . . . you know, grow a soy bean now that is comparable to canola oil. Will it come? Probably will, but by the time it comes we better be that much ahead of the game with some other developments in our canola oils to make it that much better. And we can do that here, and this government is working in partnership with industry, with private corporations, to make sure that happens.

Mr. Speaker, the trick I believe, is to having investment in this province. And when I look at the industries like the hog industry, the beef industry, any of the livestock industries, we have to have money coming in. You have money coming into this province from out of province or from within, for investment. The next thing you have to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is secure that investment. And you secure the investment in the livestock industry in this province one way — and that's by ensuring that the environmental aspects are taken care of.

That is why we in Saskatchewan have the best environmental regulations in North America, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we're going to continue that legacy and we're going to improve them because you don't have an industry unless your investment's secure; you can't secure your investment unless you take care of the environment, because the people all over this province have a right to make sure they have a good environment to live in and also have a good economy to live in by securing investments. Mr. Speaker, we do have the best system and we're going to continue to build on it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know I've gone on a bit but I want to add just a couple more things. I want to talk to you, Mr. Speaker, about law and order. I want to talk about crime for a minute.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you again this is not a black and white world like the opposition says it is. The hang 'em high Tories over there live in this black and white world I just say, just throw them in jail — just throw them in jail.

Mr. Speaker, individuals are responsible for their crimes. Those who commit crimes should be and will be brought to justice. And there can be no excuse for crime — none whatsoever.

People of this province have a basic right to live in peace. We all have a basic responsibility to respect that right of our fellow citizens, to live in peace. The breakdown in law and order, Mr.

Deputy Speaker, is intimately related to the breakup of cohesive communities and families.

Canadians believe in a strong, supportive community and are committed to rebuilding and reclaiming the streets for all Canadians and this government is on track with that. This requires though, all of us to work together to defeat crime. We need a society prepared to act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and a criminal justice system that works. We can rebuild Canada's communities without . . . rather we can't rebuild the communities without some sense of shared responsibility.

That's what Canada has lost — the sense of shared responsibility. And this is what has manifested our social disintegration, this is what's manifested in our social disintegration and the levels of crime we see around us. That sense of purpose will come about through developing new notions of citizenship where rights and responsibilities go hand in hand and where we see a creation of a strong and cohesive society that is backed up by individual efforts and responsibilities.

There are three elements that constitute, I believe, a modern approach to tackling crime. First, it's our duty as a society. Secondly, it's our responsibility as an individual, and it's the impact of the family. Mr. Speaker, it is largely from the family that social discipline and sense of responsibility is learned, a modern notion of society where rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. It requires nurturing.

Out of families grow sets of communities; the family is the starting place. If Canada's parents do their job in a very effective way, and if we as a society support that with all the mechanisms and enthusiastically support it with all the mechanisms, then we will reduce crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to be tough on crime. But we also have to be tough on the causes of crime. And this isn't just a catch-phrase. It's not just an empty slogan. It is sensible, an effective approach to combining a multifaceted strategy — personal responsibility, community action, punishment and prevention, condemnation and understanding; a criminal justice system and a society that works together and acts together to address a serious problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is how we're going to combat crime. Not the black and white nature of the people opposite who went out there when somebody's committed a crime, say hang 'em high. Doesn't work. We have to be tough on the toughened criminals, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we have to be tolerant of the troubled, because if we're not tolerant of the troubled, Mr. Speaker, and take care of those people who can't be taken care of and remould them — and remould them into honest, hardworking, dedicated citizens . . . And it can be done because it's been proven over and over.

We'd be tough on the toughened but tolerant of the troubled, Mr. Speaker. That is building a society that works to prevent crime — works together to make sure all the tools are necessary to prevent the causes of crime.

I can't stand, Mr. Speaker, when these oppositions over there paint this business of law and order in black and white, all for

popular . . . populism, political benefit. Because, Mr. Speaker, that's not what this province is built on. Those are not the foundations of the society that we live in. The foundation of this society, Mr. Speaker, is built on common sense and tolerance and toughness and responsibility, not just to yourself but to your neighbours and your neighbours' children.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a black and white world, and I wish those people over there would stop calling it a black and white world. Well, Mr. Speaker, there they go again. One at a time they're flopping back. Mr. Speaker, I want to end by saying a couple of things. I've never seen so many people say so much from their seat and so little from their feet.

Mr. Speaker, we invest in people to create an economy that works. We're putting \$1.72 billion in health care — \$1.72 billion in health care, the highest in the history of the province. And do you know where the Liberal leader was last night? He was out in Watrous trying to disrupt the meeting. And he got a very cool reception, by the way.

But do you know what he said? Just more money; just say no and ask him for . . . demand more money. Okay. Well we're spending more money that we've every spent in health care and he says spend more.

And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we spend another billion dollars on education while the Liberals and Tories say that's not enough; just build more schools, just spend more on everything in the education system — just spend more money.

Mr. Speaker, these folks . . . I don't know. Anyhow, 1.72 in health care, 1 billion on education — \$2.72 billion. If you subtract the \$770 million of interest we pay every year, that's under \$5 billion — under \$5 billion — of spending in our budget. In health care and education we spend over 50 per cent of our budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And these people over there say spend more, spend more.

Well I heard that in the 1980s. I'll tell you, I heard that in 1980 — spend, spend, spend. You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? In the 1980s, that Tory government spent a billion dollars a year more than it took in from the people of this province — a billion dollars a year more than it took in. A billion on average, a billion dollar deficit every year.

You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Since 1991 when we took government, we've reduced that by over \$300 million a year. And you know what? We've maintained our social safety nets. We've maintained our education system to the point where our children are scoring as high as any province in Canada.

We've maintained a health care system that has changed but continues to be extremely effective. Mr. Speaker, we can't have . . . And also we've reduced taxes every year. We've cut taxes and maintained the services and balanced the budget.

But the folks over here, those want-to-be government over here, they say spend more, spend more, cut more taxes, and balance the budget. It's not possible. It's not possible because we saw it tried to be accomplished in the 1980s. You cannot do it.

The Liberals, the Tories, Mr. Speaker, governing this province?

I say no thank you. I say no thank you because we have become a society that is pragmatic and it requires pragmatic government. We have supplied pragmatic government to this province where you protect the workers, where you help the farmers in rural communities, where you maintain education and social services and health care.

We've protected our society through pragmatism. We've asked the people of this province to cooperate with us. They have responded by saying yes. When Mr. Melenchuk was up in Watrous, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and said spend more, you know what? He didn't get one hand clap — not one hand clap. You know why? Because the people of this province understand pragmatism. The CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) was built on it under Tommy Douglas and it's been maintained until today, where we have the best social programs. We've been able to convince the rest of Canada to implement a national child . . . There they go again, Mr. Speaker, I can't understand it.

Mr. Speaker, I know the opposition have lots to say so I will give them that opportunity. But I want to say this before I take my seat: that with this budget, with continued tax cuts, we are going to continue on the road, the pragmatic path to prosperity that we've set out for this province. We have done it since 1991 and I'll predict that we'll do it through budgets like this for a good many more years to come. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise today and reply to the 1998 budget address. It is important to recognize that the Minister of Finance's budget reflect the priorities and the values of the NDP administration. It does not reflect the priorities and needs and values nor the hopes and aspirations of the tough and resilient people of Saskatchewan. And I use tough and I use resilient advisedly, Mr. Speaker, because to their credit, the people remaining in Saskatchewan have hung in there and survived the past seven years of this NDP administration.

During the past seven years they have endured the merciless slashing, hacking, and dismembering of the health care system in the guise of reform. The dismantling of the education system, the disintegration of the road system, and stratospheric tax collections. They have seen the growth of child hunger and poverty as evidenced by the growing number of food banks in our province.

Our people feel helpless in face of all of this but, Mr. Speaker, they are not without hope.

(1600)

Now the record of this government and the era of their provincial government is nothing to boast about, Mr. Speaker. It certainly does not merit the exaggerated praise heaped by the Minister of Finance on himself and the members opposite. And when this time and this government and their record are long past, what will remain enshrined in the memory — the collective memory — is the indomitable spirit of the stalwart people of Saskatchewan, a spirit that shone brightly in spite of the decadent activities of the '90s NDP.

Mr. Speaker, it is terribly unfortunate for all of us in Saskatchewan that the short-term tunnel vision of this NDP government has led them to nothing more than tactics improvised to make excuses for their lack of a broader vision; to make excuses for their mismanagement of the public purse; and to make excuses for their incompetence rather than them focusing on their own responsibility and lack of inspiration. These tactics have indeed demoralized the people of this province.

Mr. Premier, yours have been an administration characterized by whining, complaining, and downloading. Mr. Speaker, first this government castigated the federal government for not getting its financial house in order and balancing its budget. And then when the federal government brought those expenditures under control, including transfer payments, the members opposite holler hypocritically about their loss, abandoning your responsibilities, and you proceeded to inflict far greater revenue losses on all municipalities, school boards, and health districts.

Mr. Speaker, the health care system in this province can best be described as being on life support and in dire need of resuscitation. And that is being charitable. People in this province live in a state of high anxiety fearing for their lives because of the interminable hospital lists.

Seniors continue to be shuffled to distant nursing homes if they are able to access one. It is a shame, Mr. Speaker, that this has come to pass in Saskatchewan, the province that pioneered public universal health care.

Mr. Speaker, health care has long been touted as the Holy Grail of the NDP administration. Well there is something unholy and something unhealthy about the condition of this health care system. It is no longer a system that takes care of the sick and elderly. Dozens and dozens of hospitals have been shut down and hundreds of beds have been cut and hundreds of nurses laid off.

Nurses in Saskatoon state that the patient care is at a breaking point and is a tragedy waiting to happen. The distances between health care facilities in rural Saskatchewan are ever expanding with people driving greater and greater distances over a very dangerous highway system. One more piece, Mr. Speaker, in the systematic dismantling of rural Saskatchewan by this administration.

Mr. Speaker, ambulance drivers are panic stricken because they don't know which hospital to take critically ill or injured patients to, or if there will be beds available when they arrive. And so, members opposite, this result, this so-called health care reform, are nothing more than month-long . . . have resulted in miles-long waiting lists of people who live in great pain and fear for their lives. People of Saskatchewan are hurting and they are angry as they realize the absence of any compassion by your government in this so-called reform.

To paraphrase, Mr. Speaker, something is rotten in the state of health care in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, there is something unholy and unhealthy about the government's attitude of defeating the very people who put them in office, regarding their fiscal management.

Before the shoulders of the members of the government benches get too sore from their constant self congratulatory backslapping for their fiscal powers, let's look at the facts. We hear ad nauseam that the budget has been balanced, so how was it balanced? On the back of the members opposite? No. It was balanced on the back of the people of Saskatchewan. Let me count the ways, Mr. Speaker. Let me count the ways.

Between 1991 and 1997 the total amount of tax revenue collected by the government increased from 1.9 billion to \$3.1 billion. Mr. Speaker, that is an increase of 57 per cent. I say again, Mr. Speaker, that is an increase of 57 per cent.

In fact, the average family in Saskatchewan pays 54 per cent of their income to the various levels of government. That is no wonder, Mr. Speaker, because we have had taxes piled upon taxes piled upon taxes. We have the basic personal income tax, the high income surtax, debt reduction surtax, and the 2 per cent flat tax on net income and the 7 per cent sales tax, provincial sales tax.

No wonder, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan incomes are flat and Saskatchewan people feel flattened by a tax burden that is piled higher and deeper than any other province except Newfoundland. And on top of that, there is a taxation through utility rates. A blatant example of that is the Messer reconstruction . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order! Now the Chair is having an awful time trying to hear the member from Humboldt. If the people would like to talk rather than holler across the floor they could maybe meet behind the bar and have their conversations back there.

Ms. Julé: — And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, there is the taxation through utility rates. A blatant example of that is the Messer . . . Messer reconstruction charge, named for the newly departed but unlamented ex-CEO of SaskPower, John R. Messer, of Channel Lake, and forever enshrined in the taxpayer rip-off hall of fame.

Between 1991 and 1997, Mr. Speaker, government monopolies such as SaskPower, SaskEnergy, SGI, and SaskTel rocketed their revenues from 2.4 billion to 3.4 billion, an increase of a cool \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker — an increase of 37 per cent.

In the context of this administration's confiscatory tax regime . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you, sir. The 2 per cent reduction in the basic personal income tax, though better than nothing, is almost laughable. It does nothing to improve our competitive position versus our neighbouring provinces, Alberta and Manitoba.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, in its pre-budget submission to the Minister of Finance, makes the observation that tax freedom day in Saskatchewan arrived on July 11 last year. Tax freedom day is the day that we quit working to pay taxes to government and start working for a living.

In contrast, Mr. Speaker, the people in Friendly Manitoba get off the hook 19 days earlier, and in the Wild Rose Country of Alberta, 23 days earlier. Hard as it is to believe, Mr. Speaker, the average family in Saskatchewan works an additional 3

weeks per year to pay for their taxes compared to our provincial neighbours. And it is no wonder, Mr. Speaker, that according to the Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics' most recent figures, over 1,700 more people left Saskatchewan in the first three-quarters of last year than arrived from other provinces.

Clearly, clearly, Mr. Speaker, the state of the Saskatchewan economy is not what it is cracked up to be by the members opposite. It is not difficult to balance a budget when you tax the living daylights out of everything and everybody in sight, download on municipalities, school boards and health boards, and receive \$834 million in transfers from the federal government.

And now we see a whopping increase of \$280 million in equalization payments from the feds from last year. A 900 per cent increase reflecting the fact that in spite of the incessant boasting by this administration over its management of the economy, Saskatchewan is still a have-not province.

Mr. Speaker, this is again reflected in the many social ills besetting our province. High rates of child poverty, the highest infant mortality rate in the entire nation, uncounted and uncountable teen suicides, high teenage pregnancy rates, child prostitution, and hunger resulting in the continued and increasing need for food banks. And, Mr. Premier, in spite of your much touted prosperity, there are still close to 80,000 people on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, one of the ugliest blights on Saskatchewan's society and on our collective conscience is the sexual abuse of children. In particular, sexual abuse in the form of child prostitution by child molesters. We have not and are not doing nearly enough to eradicate this cancerous sore. And to the Minister of Social Services I say we have a floating brothel in Saskatchewan.

Recently in Saskatoon a child had been held for three months in a basement by pimps for the purpose of using her for the prostitution trade. Police could not even go in though they had been notified of the situation. The only thing that police and communities in Saskatchewan have the right to do is to notify a social worker about such circumstances.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are dangerous situations in need of immediate action by police who are most often better equipped to take urgent action on site. Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about dealing with this appalling situation, the province should undertake the following measures.

The province should fully develop prevention and early intervention strategies to help children who may be at risk as victims of sexual and physical abuse by becoming involved in prostitution.

The government should provide pathways of support. It should empower the police to assist children in danger of being solicited for the purpose of prostitution. To place the children in a safe place, out of chaos, and stabilize for up to 72 hours until assessment and placement has taken place.

It should enact provincial legislation that would inject a stay-away order restraining anyone who interferes with the

healing process of victims of child prostitution. Anyone who threatens in any way the healing while it is taking place should be subject to a \$25,000 fine.

(1615)

The province should provide police with the authority to search a place where they believe a child is being held by pimps or any perpetrators of this crime for the purpose of engaging in child prostitution activities. Presently to my knowledge, in Saskatchewan, there is no provision for this.

I have introduced a Bill, Mr. Speaker, to accomplish these essential steps to effect protection for sexually abused children. And I trust, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill will receive all parties' support for a vital cause that transcends all partisan politics. No one is exempt from being responsible for the well-being of our children. If any one of us should ignore this responsibility, we should reflect on the words of William Pitt the Younger when he urged the abolition of the slave trade. And I quote, Mr. Speaker, "How shall we hope to obtain forgiveness for those enormous evils we have committed."

Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, I had a discussion with Regina Mayor Archer about the sexual abuse of children through child prostitution. It is interesting that Mayor Archer, along with many others, are referring to sexual abuse through the prostitution trade as a form of slavery — and that is exactly what it is. What is wrong with a government that will tolerate and accept this modern day slavery?

Mr. Speaker, the government's announcement last week of initiatives it's taking towards building independence is to be applauded. The Canadian child tax benefit and the national child supplements based on the number of children in a family and the family income is indeed a step in the right direction. It is a stepping-stone to building independence and experiencing the pride and self-fulfilment that comes with the work ethic and a sense of interdependence. It is most appropriate to thank the federal government for that benefit.

The employment supplement benefit and additional health benefits will hopefully ensure that people will be better off financially than if they were on social assistance. The drug, optometrist, emergency ambulance, medical supplies, and chiropractic services are benefits that are most welcome for the children of Saskatchewan.

To reiterate, Mr. Speaker, the child benefit initiatives announced last week are indeed a welcome improvement. These initiatives are long overdue and only begin to remedy the array of deeply rooted social problems I previously referred to.

I do have a number of concerns with the initiatives and I'm going to state them here today. I note that under the family health benefit, many parents will be eligible only for drug coverage which would include a hundred dollar semi-annual deductible and a 35 per cent consumer co-payment thereafter. This may not be sufficient. In effect if parents are ill and they cannot afford the needed medication, their children will ultimately suffer. Children need their parents to be healthy, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they are healthy.

Another concern I have is in regards to the Youth Futures pilot project in Prince Albert. This program restricts eligibility from 18- to 20-year-olds. There are many men and women over that age, Mr. Speaker, in their 20's and 30's who are trying to provide for a family and who are struggling to access training and employment opportunities. They are excluded from this opportunity and are forced to remain on social assistance.

And, Mr. Speaker, the provincial training allowance program appears to ignore employment realities. There are already cited instances of persons who have entered the program and completed the academics side only to be told that there are no job placements presently available. This is discouraging and unfair to those who enrol, Mr. Speaker. There needs to be more factual assessments done with employers and business places on the availability of spaces for job placements. In order for the program to be successful it is essential that job placement be initiated concurrently with or immediately after completion of academic training.

Mr. Speaker, one other group of people that I am greatly concerned about are single women between the age of 55 and 60. This is the group with the highest poverty rate. These people have very little chance of accessing jobs. They are not eligible for training and they cannot access their pensions yet. Their plight, Mr. Speaker — their plight has been overlooked as has the plight of the disabled.

Those who are disabled and on assistance that have no children and no opportunity to be self-employed are not able to access any of the options in the redesigned social assistance program. These disabled persons have not had their rate of assistance increased either.

One other point that has been circumvented and should be noted by the Premier, his government, and the minister responsible regarding the employment supplement program, is that it cannot be accessed unless people are employed. And we all know that meaningful employment is in short supply in Saskatchewan at present.

People will not be able to get jobs, Mr. Speaker, unless we focus on wealth creation through lower taxes and fees, lower utility rates and lessening of regulatory burden.

Workman's compensation, Mr. Speaker, and occupational health and safety regulations and costs must come in line with Alberta and Manitoba to ease the burden of existing and perspective employers, and the Crown Corporations Tendering Agreement should be terminated.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that excessive regulations restrict growth and cause financial burdens, resulting in no start-up, no investment business climate, and economic stagnation. The end result is no new jobs. And, Mr. Speaker, the scorched earth rule policies of this government appear to be deliberately designed to lay waste to rural Saskatchewan.

My constituents tell me what is needed and they have been saying it for a number of years. They say they need financial support for farmers to set up short-line railways. They need an accelerated road repair program, accessible rural health care, a moratorium on school closures, and proper funding for

education. They need the restoration of municipal funding to former levels. They need job opportunities for young people other than part-time, dead end, minimum wage jobs. They want you to get rid of the policies that restrict and constrict business initiatives.

Mr. Premier, the budget didn't deliver on any of these. This administration has betrayed the faith of rural Saskatchewan. The rural roads are strewn with broken promises like so many potholes. And where are the VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues that municipalities were promised?

Last year municipal revenue sharing was reduced by 29 million. This year when SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) was asking for \$56 million for their revenue-sharing pools, the Minister of Finance provided a measly \$3 million. How many miles of roads does the minister think that will repair or rebuild? One wonders if the Minister of Municipal Affairs carries any clout in cabinet.

On the education front, Mr. Premier, you are slowly but surely dismantling the rural school system. Rural residents of Saskatchewan have serious worries about the distances their children are now forced to travel and the stress it places on their lives. And they are certainly concerned about the declining resources that diminish the quality of education in larger, post-secondary educations.

It is sad but true, that what rural people have come to expect from this government are closed facilities, lower quality services, and higher costs. Perhaps this is a reflection of the fact, Mr. Premier, that you hold hardly any rural seats and don't expect to win any in the next election, and therefore, don't much care.

And, Mr. Premier, you seem to lack comprehension of your very words issued through the throne speech that communities are the bedrock of Saskatchewan. Your statement, if you believe what you are saying, does not match the reality of your absence of support for communities.

To sum up, Mr. Speaker, the only reason the budget is balanced is by sleight of hand in the form of federal equalization payments, revenue transfers from the Crowns, and ruinous income tax collection.

The fact is, Mr. Premier, you have managed the economy about as well as you have managed the Guyana, Channel Lake, and the Messer severance mess. Worst of all, our debt is being addressed through borrowed money. And you have failed to harness the unlimited wealth of our human and natural resources. And that is why Saskatchewan is still a have-not province. And that is why we cannot celebrate either our social or economic growth.

And for these reasons, I cannot support the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm proud to stand in this Assembly and give my support to a budget which has given the people of Saskatchewan a feeling of confidence, a feeling of comfort as we approach the new millennium.

The prior speaker — I don't know where she's living. Good grief! The United Nations has stated that Saskatchewan is the best place in the world to live. If this is the case, where is she living? We're not sure.

Let's take a look at the economics. What do credit companies, what do the credit rating things do? What have they done with the credit rating of Saskatchewan? It went up. Just like the Telemiracle — it goes up, up, up. But we don't need a miracle, because we have sound fiscal policies which those people do not know of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this budget, *Investing in People: Building on the Momentum*, concentrates on job growth; stronger, safer, healthier communities; financial freedom and a prosperous future; and strong fiscal management. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fifth consecutive budget of this government. A remarkable feat attesting to the perseverance and the resiliency of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the other day when the Minister of Social Services introduced the new building independence, investing in people plan, for Saskatchewan people it was one of the proudest days in this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this is the first new legislation of social assistance in 30 years. When the minister said that this legislation would stand social assistance on its head, he knew what he was talking about. This government wants to reduce dependence on social assistance, not by cutting benefits as some other provinces have done, but — and this is so important, I hope the member opposite is listening — it gave families a choice that makes economic sense.

Thousands of families across the province will benefit from this strategy over time. The objectives are to reduce the depth of child and family poverty, to decrease dependence on social assistance, to reduce the trend towards generational social assistance dependence, enhance the accountability of the social assistance program.

And what's so exciting about this program is that it's geared to the children and families, the cornerstone of any society. Mr. Speaker, statistics show that in Canada we have a staggering number of children living in poverty. And what is even more frightening is that the rate is growing. This new program will assist not only those on welfare, but it's geared also to those children of the low income family. Depending on the income of the family these children will be provided with free health services.

Mr. Speaker, this government is to be commended for its insight, its compassion, its dedication to all people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that this blight of child poverty in this richly endowed country is a damning indictment. I also mentioned the alarming rate at which it is rising.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that ours is the correct philosophy,

the correct path to help eradicate this blight. This is not Alabama North, this is not a one-way bus ticket out of the province, this is not workfare as advocated by Tories. This is a compassionate, realistic, meaningful program to alleviate a growing concern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the rate of increase in child poverty in this province is growing at a rate of 7 per cent, a statistic that I am not very proud of. But, Mr. Speaker, the rate of growth in child poverty in Tory-rich Alberta has grown by 34 per cent, while Tory Ontario has an unforgivable growth rate of 99 per cent — 99 per cent.

And guess what the Tory plans are? Presently they are negotiating with a private American company to take over control of this issue. Estimates vary, but this company expects this contract will have a net profit of well over \$180 million — \$180 million on the backs of the poor. Once a Tory, always a Tory.

Mr. Speaker, the budget also addresses the issue of safe communities. The Young Offenders Act has been on the minds of many people lately. This is a federal Act but this government has made several proposals regarding young offenders. They are as follows:

We have proposed tougher sentencing for young offenders convicted of serious violent crimes.

Youths who commit violent crimes such as murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, or aggravated sexual assault should usually be dealt with in an adult court.

And the names of these serious young offenders would be released once they were convicted if, in so doing, it would help the public in the opinion of the court.

Public protection should be the first principle of the Young Offenders Act.

(1630)

But what we must remember though, that most of our kids who come in contact with the young offender system don't re-offend. The Premier stated in one of his speeches: I believe these proposals speak to the glaring weaknesses of the current young offender system while protecting its strengths. The public has the right to be protected from serious violent offenders. The public also has the right to attack the causes of youth crime. And that's what we're going to do.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the most important part to remember of all of this is that most of our kids are good kids. The vast majority of them — the ninety-nine and a half per cent — are doing their homework. They are playing hockey. They are taking part in various activities. Their worst offence is probably, as the Premier said, that they think their folks are a little behind the times. And they're probably right.

Mr. Speaker, our province is a trading province and relies heavily on transportation to carry its goods to market. Last year

this government made a 10-year \$2.5 billion commitment to Saskatchewan's road and highway system. This year's budget has set a goal to repair or resurface 3,600 kilometres of roads and highways — a distance equivalent from Saskatoon to Quebec City.

Mr. Speaker, we have also begun to twin the remainder of national Highway No. 1. Our commitment is to complete the twinning of No. 1 and the Yellowhead within 14 years. Too long, the Tories cry. Let's see a five-year plan, scream the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, I truly wish that the Liberals would use their influence — if they have any — to convince their cousins in Ottawa to advance this national cause. The Tories remain quiet, and rightly so. Who sold all the highway equipment at fire sale prices? What we could have done if they would have not done that.

Mr. Speaker, today in a rapidly changing world all governments must demonstrate a new vision for national transportation that links us together as a nation and is so vital for our economic health. North-south trade is becoming more important than east-west interprovincial trade. And that's a sad commentary on this nation building.

Mr. Speaker, we need a national vision on Canadian transportation but I have little faith in any Liberal vision as they remain a government of no policy.

Mr. Speaker, our roads and highways will be completed on time within budget and without reduction in other health areas . . . other areas.

I'd like to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to spend a few minutes on the health. We hear so much about how this health system has deteriorated and how we are not . . . that we are not taking proper care of the health system. I've stated in this House many, many times and with a great deal of pride, but it bears repeating that the south-west Saskatchewan was health region no. 1. A model first for the province, and then for all of Canada.

Our investment this year in health care was increased by \$88 million, and yet the member from Humboldt states that we should have put in a lot more. Already our Health budget is \$1.7 billion and amounts to 33 per cent of our budget. Health care received almost half of all the new spending in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, could our health program be improved? Of course. Could we afford pharmacare? Of course, if we got a little bit of help from the federal government. And even Allan Rock, the federal Minister of Health, concurs if they would increase their funding just a little bit. What would happen if they increased it to 40 per cent from the paltry 13 per cent which they now do?

The sad part about all of this though, Mr. Speaker, is not the funding. Provinces like Alberta are thinking seriously of dropping out of this national program. If they drop out of this national program, what will happen to the standard of care in all of the other provinces? Within Alberta we would have private health care.

Mr. Speaker, I plead — I plead earnestly — that the opposition

would join us in asking the federal cousins to increase their funding in this important area but it'll probably fall on deaf ears.

But hope springs eternally in the human heart. We will continue to work with health districts and health professionals to secure a publicly funded modern health system for our children and our grandchildren.

Contrast this with the Tories who would introduce a two-tier — or as the member from Redberry said, three-tier, all-tier system — one for the rich and the other for you and me.

Mr. Speaker, "The Doctor is Not In" is an essay by Ronald Glasser, a medical doctor, which appeared in *Harper's* magazine in March 1998. I wish that all of the opposition would take time just to read the synopsis of it. Glasser is an Minneapolis pediatrician and the author of several books on health care in the United States. In this essay, he describes the health care and how it is with the private plan. And he states: one hundred and sixty point three million of us (and he's talking about the doctors) now find ourselves held captive to a corporate health care system that earns \$952 billion a year but can't afford the luxury of a conscience or a heart.

This is the type that these people opposite are advocating in line with this tone and temper of the time, 2,300 Massachusetts physicians in December of last year signed a despairing manifesto in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and they state:

The time we are allowed to spend with the sick shrinks under the pressure to increase through-put as though we were dealing with industrial commodities rather than afflicted human beings. Physicians and nurses are being prodded by threats and bribes to advocate allegiance to patients and to shun the sickest, who may be unprofitable. Some of us risk being fired or de-listed for giving or even discussing expensive services, and many are offered bonuses for minimizing care.

Is that the kind of system we want to see in Saskatchewan? Is this the kind we want to see in Canada? There is no way that we want to see this type of system, and yet our opposition would say that we should go with this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — I have a few other things with regards to it but I want to just make one other thing. An average doctor in the United States on average in 1995 roughly got \$250,000 — not a bad sum. But the sums dwindle into pittance when compared with the earnings of the executives of these companies. These CEOs have a salary of up to \$10 million. They're not doctors. They run this corporation and those \$10 million were taken away from those people who need it — the sick.

And if this is the type of system which the Tories want to talk about I hope that they do, and I hope that they say it loud and clear that they want this two-tier system because we will defeat them each and every day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this party will never, ever allow these people to privatize health care. Mr. Speaker, we hear all kinds of hollering from opposite because they finally realized that they've heard some of the truths about private health care. I would hope that this would sink through to them. I have not got much faith.

Mr. Speaker, another topic which has been in . . . that we've been hearing a little bit about is the Crowns. Now the Crowns play a vital role in our province's economy and in the lives of Saskatchewan people. The four major Crowns in the six major investments account for 17 per cent of the Saskatchewan gross domestic product, or approximately 4.2 billion, and 9 per cent of the employment in Saskatchewan. That's a large part of our economy. And we are so proud of that, and so are the Saskatchewan people.

The Saskatchewan people take great pride in the service which is provided by the Crowns. The cost for these services are either the lowest or the second lowest throughout all of Canada. And that is a proven fact. The Crowns provide the people with a reliable service at a reasonable cost. Even with rates that are among the lowest in Canada, our Crown corporations earn profits that are comparable to privately owned outlets in other provinces. The only difference is that the money goes back to the people in Saskatchewan. It doesn't go to London, Zurich, and New York.

Half of these profits are taken from the Crowns to pay for capital expenditures which are needed to provide services to our children, our grandchildren in Saskatchewan. The other half of the profits provide a dividend to Crown Investments Corporation, which we all know as CIC.

Some of this money is used to fund the remaining costs of megaproject investments, thanks to the former Tory administration who left a legacy of near bankruptcy for this great province. The remainder of the dividends become part of the General Revenue Fund and are used to help pay for health, education, and highways.

Mr. Speaker, some Crowns have been active in other countries for about 10 years. There have been some successes, and there have been some failures. But overall, these activities have generated over \$100 million in profits, not for the money barons in London, New York, or Zurich, but for the people of Saskatchewan.

Every dollar earned in the other countries is a dollar that does not have to come from Saskatchewan ratepayers. Mr. Speaker, these Crowns provide many jobs in this province. Just imagine what would occur if the Crowns were privatized, as the Tories would do if they had the opportunity.

Why just the other day the real leader of the Tories, the member from Kindersley, stated that if — and thank goodness it's a mighty big if — if they formed governments, the Crowns would be gone at the snap of his fingers. Sold to his free-wheeling friends at fire sale prices.

A comment by the member from Melfort-Tisdale regarding the privatization of part or all of the Crowns strikes fear in the hearts of the citizens of Saskatchewan. Following the advice of

big corporations, they would sell off the Crowns at fire sale prices and profits would flow in a gushing torrent out of this province.

Just imagine the social upheaval that would be created in just selling off one of these Crowns. Thousands of high-paying jobs would disappear. The dislocation of citizens would bring utter chaos to this province. Do they really believe that the head office, which employ over 3,000 workers, would remain in Saskatchewan? Dream along.

Mr. Speaker, they offer an alternative. An alternative of social dislocation, utter chaos, and the revenue loss of hundreds of millions of dollars. Is this the vision of this party of opportunistic politicians spawned in the murky depths of midnight? I say, and the people who echo the same sentiments, pooh on this party, pooh on their plans to sell the Crowns — this party of opportunistic politicians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1645)

Mr. Wall: — Now Mr. Speaker, this is not the vision of this government. It is not the vision of the people of Saskatchewan, and they will never forget this renegade mob of politicians who were inspired divinely and who, like that former administration, will bring this province to the brink of bankruptcy and would replicate this heinous plot.

The Tories opposite honestly and fervently believe that government has no part to play in business. Big business will create jobs and this will alleviate any and all social issues. Medicare will be handled by private insurance companies, who I've just showed in the United States who reap huge multimillion profits on the backs of the sick. Welfare will be operated by private firms, again making obscene profits on the back of the poorest of the poor. Education will not be universal, free, and a stepping-stone for the masses, but a system catering to the rich, while the poor folks will be relegated to remain in the lower stratum with little or no hope for advancement.

Mr. Speaker, sound far fetched? Let's take a look at what the huge multinational corporations which the Tories favour have planned for the wealthy nations of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). For three years these members, encouraged and abetted by our federal government, have been meeting secretly — sound familiar? — to set up an organization by which investment will flow freely between nation states without any regard to labour standards, no regards to culture, no regards to safety nets, health care, and universal education. A banquet for a few, and abject poverty for the masses.

Mr. Speaker, the MAI, the multilateral agreement on investment, as presently drawn up, is not designed to ensure that the rights and freedoms of the world's people are held by democratically elected governments. It is bluntly speaking, a charter of rights and freedoms for corporations only. A charter to be guaranteed by national governments in the interest of profitable transnational investment. It is meant to protect and benefit corporations, not citizens. It endows privately owned corporations with the power of nation states, without the

accountability of national government.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we must do everything we possibly can to oppose the MAI as it is presently structured. As Murray Dobbin states in his book, *The Myth of the Good Corporate Citizen*, corporations do evil to the public, to the environment, and to democracy itself. Corporations are usurping the role of government, he says. His specific complaint is that so-called transnational corporations have persuaded governments to sign on to the multilateral agreement on investment, a proposal that levels the playing-field for international investment and capital movement. I say we have to oppose this with everything that we can.

Mr. Speaker, the Education minister talked about the education funding which has been released and so forth. I'm not going to dwell on that except to say that we have started a trend and we are committed to where we will as a government pay more for education as the circumstances warrant. Our government has acknowledged that the provincial share of K to 12 operating costs has been steadily declining to the point where it is just under 40 per cent in 1997-98. But we have said our objective is to reverse that trend, and this is the start of that trend, albeit very small, but it is a start.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on March 25 the member from Kindersley ranted and raved about fiscal mismanagement of this government. But what those Tories forgot to mention was that citizens of Saskatchewan have paid — and are still paying — millions of dollars in interest because of the fiscal mismanagement of the Devine Tory government. Seven hundred to \$800 million each and every year, a total of over \$5.5 billion, has been spent on interest alone since 1992. Don't talk to us about fiscal mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, this sum is equal to more than this year's budget. Just imagine what \$700 million a year would do. It would build many kilometres of highways. It would replace many buildings on the campuses. It would provide many bursaries for the young people, social housing for the needy, and additional schools.

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the minister for Property Management Corporation. Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much. And thank you also to the members for giving leave. I would like to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to the members of the Assembly a number of guests seated in your gallery. Some of them are former colleagues of mine from the credit union back in Meadow Lake who are down here on a training course this past week.

I will introduce them one at a time. Gloria Harris is on the far right. Beside her is Charlene Villeneuve, Jolene Dyck, and beside her is Jenny Zuchotski, and then also Angela La Brash who works here in the Legislative Building. If all members

would join me in welcoming them here to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seven hundred to \$800 million each and every year — that's what we're paying in interest. Two million dollars a day because of the mismanagement that we had in the former Tory administration. This sum is equal to more than this year's budget, and it would supply us with many social programs.

The Tories opposite are attempting to convince the citizens to support them, and their fiscal management will save the best interests of the people. Let's just quickly review how the members opposite would have performed on two of the last transactions of this government. First the Conservatives yelled and screamed — no, they ranted and raved, tore out their hair — because we would not sell our interest in the Lloydminster upgrader for 7 cents on the dollar. And do you know why they opposed . . . they wanted us to do it? Because Alberta was doing it and Alberta knows how to do big business. And so Alberta went ahead and they did it and they lost their shirt.

An Hon. Member: — Ask them how much the NOVA Corporation lost — \$500 million.

Mr. Wall: — Exactly. As the member stated, Alberta lost \$500 million. What did we do? Well at 7 cents if we would have sold it, we would have realized \$20 million. Now that's a lot of money. However we sold a few years later — hang on to the seats of your pants you people over there, you financial gurus — we sold it for a net gain of \$310 million. Much better than the 20. A net gain of around \$250 million — not too shabby a transaction.

Mr. Speaker, next the Liberals and the Tories demanded, absolutely demanded, that we sell our Cameco shares for approximately \$18 per share. This would have brought in, this would have brought in \$180 million. Now that is a real lot of money. Instead, later we sold 10 million shares for approximately \$73 per share and garnered over 700 million. That's right, 700 million for a difference of — hang on to your hats you financial wizards — 500 million for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, these two examples illustrate the careful planning of the members opposite and what they would have done.

In addition to the above, the fixing of Tory deals of the '80s, such as the Weyerhaeuser deal, 150 million saved; NewGrade Upgrader, 600 million worth of taxpayers' money at stake amounts to savings of — don't blink — of \$1.5 billion. Mr. Speaker, maybe someone could have done better on the Channel Lake deal, but I tell you this, but I tell you this, I wouldn't give the members opposite the opportunity to deal with my \$50 weekly allowance, no siree. I would not trust them with that. I would lose.

Mr. Speaker, who are these new Tories? I would like to congratulate the member from Kindersley and his three henchmen and the beautiful snow job they gave in convincing the four former Liberals to join this group of political opportunists. Mr. Speaker, what is so sad is not that they moved — that isn't the sad part — but that they gave up their principles, their compassion, and their honour for a political opportunity. This unholy alliance spawned in the murky depths of the night lacks credibility, it lacks honour, it lacks honesty, and it lacks truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, a party of opportunistic politicians. Well, Mr. Speaker, the citizens of Saskatchewan will say . . . you know what they will say to this party of opportunistic politicians. Mr. Speaker, how could anyone trust these opportunists? Last Thursday we were treated to an extreme victory, all by the member from Kindersley, who ahead of time — and this is the way the House operates — had agreed to a plan. And his promise was that there would be ample time for the minister from Regina . . . or the member from Regina-Victoria, to give his judicious delivery. Well this sounds like a minor thing, Mr. Speaker, but it's not really a minor thing — but let's say it's a minor thing.

How could anyone in this group . . . how could anyone trust this group with major decisions when they will not keep their word even on a minor thing like this? Because, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will recognize them for what they are and will echo the same sentiments — this party of opportunistic politicians.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the leadership race presently being run by the Tories — an interesting scenario. This is the party which is hoping that a white knight on a black steed will lead them out of the darkness of night from whence they came. When the first knight declined their pleas and urging, the race was on.

Who are the candidates? Well, Mr. Speaker, true to form this Tory Party has a Tory, it has a former Liberal, and it has a Reform artist vying for this unenviable position. Mr. Speaker, a leadership race is a time for rallying the troops, a time to let the public know the principles — if any — of the party, of consolidating and the reaffirming of the platform of the party.

Mr. Speaker, this leadership is not being held in a legion hall in Saskatchewan, it's not being held in an Elks hall, it's not being held at the Centre of the Arts in Regina or Saskatoon, it's not being held in the phone booth — but it's being held in our mailbox.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Whether it's a personal mailbox, a legal mailbox. And what's that other mail that they don't deliver any more? Junk mail.

But, Mr. Speaker, all of the above is irrelevant, as the member from Kindersley has already anointed the next leader, the candidate who was defeated in the last federal election and who will be defeated in the next provincial election despite the

support of the member from Kindersley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the main thrust of this budget was to be fiscally prudent. We will not spend more than we have received, we will reduce taxes when it is feasible and sustainable, and we will lessen our children's mortgage as much as possible by reducing the horrendous debt left by the former Tory administration.

Mr. Speaker, I appeal to all members, on the basis of compassion, care, and cooperation, that all members of this House would stand to support our program for building independence, investing in people; our program for increasing the funding for health; our program for increasing educational funding; our program for tax relief; our program for debt reduction; and our program for job creation.

However, I am not so naïve as to believe that the members opposite will find it in their hearts to support the poor, the young, the elderly, the ill — those members of society who so desperately need our support.

Mr. Speaker, I know that all of the New Democrats will support this enlightened budget and that the vast majority of Saskatchewan citizens will endorse this plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair would just like to check with the hon. member for a moment. In the noise in the House, I couldn't tell, did he move adjournment of debate?

Mr. Wall: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I would adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

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**SPECIAL ORDER
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