

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this afternoon I rise to present a petition in opposition to enforced municipal amalgamation. It is a . . . The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And this petition is signed by constituents of mine from the area of Cabri and also from the community of Carlyle. Thank you.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition dealing with one of the more favourable ideas that have come in the province, the reduction in the fuel tax. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

And these are signed from people all over the province that support this concept.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise on behalf of many of my constituents who are opposed to forced amalgamation. And their prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to urge the Government of Saskatchewan to reject proposals of any forced amalgamation of municipalities.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Guernsey, Pilger, Middle Lake, Lake Lenore.

And I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reject any proposals regarding the forced amalgamation of municipalities.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from the area of Clavet, which is not one of what is considered an economically feasible area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens of the province concerned about the high price of fuel. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Regina, Pleasantdale, and Melfort in my constituency.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present a petition regarding the price of fuel in this province. And the petition reads . . . prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by individuals from the communities of Melfort and Regina.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — I read a petition in regards to the forced . . . the suggested forced amalgamation of municipalities. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with forced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And that is . . . the signatures here are from Maidstone and area.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too stand today to present petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about the high fuel tax. The prayer is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

And the people who signed this are from Kinistino, Melfort.

I so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise again today to present a petition on behalf of people in Swift Current and area concerned about hospital funding. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist in the regeneration plan for the Swift Current Regional Hospital for approximately \$7.54 million, thereby allowing the Swift Current District Health Board the opportunity to provide improved health care services.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Swift Current, Success, and Webb.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to also present petitions today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Lloydminster, Unity, North Battleford, Maidstone, Marshall, Lashburn — all in the northwest, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to read a petition concerning the Blaine Lake Medical Clinic.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to overrule the Parkland Health Board to change its decision and allow the Blaine Lake Medical Clinic to have a permanent physician with consistent hours and days.

I present this from the good folks from Blaine Lake.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise with a petition opposed to enforced municipal amalgamation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

There's petitioners from Bienfait, Estevan, and numerous other places from around Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to read a petition of people concerned about forced amalgamation:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reject any proposals regarding the forced amalgamation of municipalities.

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

The petitioners are from the bedroom community of Clavet, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wakefield: — I rise to present a petition. It reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with forced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

I present this on behalf of the signatures from Bienfait, Perdue, and Harris.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens who are concerned about the enforced municipal amalgamation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petitioners come from the communities of Bienfait, Estevan, North Portal, and Harris.

I do so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring forth a petition regarding forced amalgamation.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And I have petitioners from Bienfait, Moose Jaw and Briercrest.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also wish to present a petition regarding municipal amalgamation and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by individuals from Bienfait, Estevan, North Portal and Harris.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great responsibility that I rise to present the petition today also respecting the issue of forced amalgamation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with forced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petition is signed by the good folks of Bienfait, North Portal, Frobisher, Estevan, Elfros and Wynyard.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters: to halt plans to proceed with the amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan; to cause the government to ensure reliable cellular service to Watson and area; to provide funding for the Swift Current Regional Hospital; and to reduce fuel taxes.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. This afternoon I give notice that on day no. 21 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the year 2000-2001, fiscal.

Thank you.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, in an effort to keep this government open and accessible, I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan): please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs: please provide a schedule for all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Education: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to public for services rendered implemented by your department for the fiscal year 2000-2001.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Social Services: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation: please provide a schedule for all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department in 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Thank you.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: how much money is your department planning to spend on advertising, direct mail, or any other type of promotion for the 2000-2001 provincial budget.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department by the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I also give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Sask Water: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by Sask Water for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm standing I have another written question. I give notice that I shall on day 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Economic and Co-operative Development: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by

your department for the year 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Northern Affairs: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Energy and Mines: please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management): please provide a schedule of all rate increases, service fee increases, and all other increases and charges to the public for services rendered implemented by your department for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a group of 22 public servants that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're hard-working representatives of the Department of Justice, Finance, Labour, and the Legislative Library.

It's my understanding they've had a quick tour, and that they've come to view the proceedings of the Assembly. They will have sessions on the use of our library and on our system of government and the session on the government in the British parliamentary tradition. And I see Ms. Woods will be challenged to provide the debriefing from question period as well.

So I would ask all members to join with me in a warm welcome to members of the public service in your gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through

you to all members in this House I'd like to recognize somebody who's no stranger in this House; a friend to members on both sides of the House; somebody who used to be with the newspaper and is now with the radio station — Bonny Braden.

And with her is some journalism students who were with our caucus this morning and we reminded the students that there were members on the other side of the House who would really love to be in our caucus in the morning, but they had the opportunity. We appreciated seeing them. And congratulations on picking a very good professor.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I was going to say I want to introduce to you — but I know that is not necessary — a friend of yours and mine. But through you to the House, Mr. Don Dament in your gallery. And as I say, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dament was the sheriff at Battleford in his previous life, and in his present life, he is marshal of the golf course at Jackfish Lake. I'd ask all members to please welcome him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, Mr. Barry Spencer from the city of Weyburn. Barry owns and operates a very successful car dealership in Weyburn and he's a special friend as well. And he worked very hard to help elect the Saskatchewan Party in Weyburn-Big Muddy and all of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature two of my constituents who are sitting in the west gallery, Gary and Jessie Carlson. Both Gary and Jessie are participants in so many parts of our community that it's hard to describe it all. So I think will just pick one for Gary and one for Jessie.

Gary has just recently been re-elected to be on the senate at the University of Saskatchewan. Jessie is a very capable leader in the Regina Horticultural Society as well as many other things.

I also would like to bring special greetings to them on behalf of the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley because he has served with them in many, many capacities in the United Church.

I would ask all members to welcome the Carlsons.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly I'd like to introduce two constituents of mine that are up in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon. Mr. Lenn Dovell, the owner-operator of Golf Kenosee at Kenosee park . . . or Moose Mountain Provincial Park, I guess it is. Everybody calls it Kenosee.

And Daryl Safinuk, the owner-operator of the restaurant at the Kenosee Inn, also from the Moose Mountain Provincial Park, and I would ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the official opposition, to welcome the representatives of the PSC (Public Service Commission) to the Assembly today. And I hope that you find the proceedings here instructional and interesting. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In many ways it seems a bit of a shame to single out one of the fine people with the Public Service Commission that are here today, but it is my honour to do just that and single out one John Abraham. Part of that is I know John through a mutual friend of ours, Pat Danforth, and it also is sort of fitting in that Mr. Abraham is one of the people that has come to our province from the Sudan via, I understand, an education in India.

But I ask all members to join me in welcoming John Abraham.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Arm River Constituency Hockey Teams Win Championships

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise today to congratulate two hockey teams in my constituency. First up, the Loreburn Nineteeners Senior Hockey Team who've won the Provincial C Championship for the second year in a row. They also won the league championship.

I'd also like to congratulate the Outlook Express who have won the Provincial B Midget Championship.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Light Source Synchrotron

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to talk about our government's commitment to research and development. Last week our government approved a \$25 million investment in the Canadian Light Source Synchrotron. This funding through the Department of Economic and Co-operative Development represents the largest single contribution outside of the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

The Synchrotron is the single largest scientific project in Canadian history. The Synchrotron represents unprecedented opportunities for Saskatoon and the province as a whole.

It will provide 2,000 person-years of employment in the construction phase alone; create 200 permanent positions; generate \$35 million per year in new research and development spending; and greatly increase Saskatchewan's ability to make value-added products.

As well, the Minister of Economic and Co-operative Development announced over \$1 million in research funding for our two universities.

And in last Thursday's budget, we announced the creation of the innovation and science fund. This new \$10 million fund will help make Saskatchewan researchers access grants from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. Investments in research and development today will help us attract more projects like the Synchrotron and will provide opportunities for our best and brightest minds to build their future here in Saskatchewan.

This is something we on this side of the House support.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lakeland Community Citizen of the Year

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in our honoured Assembly today to bring a congratulatory salute to one of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, the resort communities of Emma Lake and Christopher Lake and the village of Christopher Lake annually honour a deserving citizen for their many contributions to the Lakeland community.

Mr. Speaker, this year these communities have chosen Annette Heisler as their 1999 citizen of the year.

Mr. Speaker, Annette's contributions to her community are many and varied. Annette is a true giver of spirit, believing that it is better to give than it is to receive.

Some of her many commitments include her activities at St. Mary's Church where she serves on the church council, helps coordinate the World Day of Prayer, instructs religion, and helps with baptisms.

Mr. Speaker, Annette is also involved with the Emma and Christopher Lake association, serving as a beach representative and the liaison to the rural municipality of Lakeland. She has also been involved in home care ministries, the Lakeland Millennium Committee, the Lakeland Recreation Board, Red Cross, Meals On Wheels, and many other community programs too numerous to mention.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the Assembly join me in congratulating Annette Heisler for all of her accomplishment and dedication to our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mobile Computerized Tomography Scan Introduced

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with the members of the House an example of the government's commitment to health. A new mobile CT (computerized tomography) service introduced in southwest Saskatchewan will cut travel times for residents in and around both Moose Jaw and Swift Current.

CT scans provide detailed pictures of internal areas of the body conventional x-rays can't reach. The scans are commonly used to diagnose tumours, strokes, and other injuries to the brain and spinal cord.

A custom trailer will carry a mobile CT scanner from Moose Jaw to Swift Current and back again each week. This means

that many people will no longer have to travel to Regina or Saskatoon to have scans done.

The new mobile scanner — the very first in Canada, Mr. Speaker — is a pilot project funded by Sask Health. The province has provided \$927,000 in one-time start-up costs, such as buying and preparing equipment, and training staff. They will also provide more than \$400,000 annually for operating costs.

The two locations will do an estimated 2,000 scans each year, primarily for the people in the two host districts and residents of South Country, Southwest, and Rolling Hills Health District. The five districts have co-operated in planning the shared service.

This year the province will spend 3 million to staff and run the province's 8 CT scans. The number of scans done in the province has increased rapidly.

Mr. Speaker, good news for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Melfort Restaurant Expansion

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today we'll be voting on the budget. Those who believe in tax fairness, tax simplification, tax reduction, debt reduction, and essential program enhancement will vote for the budget.

Those who believe a budget is just not a budget unless it has the potential for a billion dollar deficit will oppose it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's another more tangible way to support the economic message of the budget, and smart business people all over the province are doing just that. They see the Saskatchewan economy growing and they are expanding their operation to take advantage of that and to contribute to our solid economy.

A case in point: according to *The Melfort Journal* of February 8, the Melfort KFC restaurant has expanded its business by adding a Pizza Hut menu. They plan, later on this summer, to include a Taco Bell franchise — three menu choices where once there was one. And dare I add? No PST (provincial sales tax) on chicken, or pizza, and none to come on his enchiladas either.

I congratulate the proprietor of the Melfort KFC-Pizza Hut-Taco Bell conglomerate — the member from Melfort. And I thank him for his vote of confidence.

To quote from the February 8 *Melfort Journal*: "I guess you get to a stage where you can only feed people in a community so much chicken," So I guess that means he's going to be voting for the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

April Declared Agricultural Sciences Month

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has proclaimed April to be Agricultural Sciences Month in

Saskatchewan as a means of promoting the importance of agriculture research to Saskatchewan.

Research helps to increase the competitiveness of our agriculture and food industry. Research and development in all sectors are crucial building blocks of the Saskatchewan economy.

Yesterday in Swift Current in recognition of these facts, the Minister of Agriculture attended a ceremony celebrating the accomplishments of the Wheatland Conservation Area group and dedicating a facility which will assist Wheatland in its agricultural research. A ceremony, Mr. Speaker, which recognizes the importance of co-operation between governments and individual groups for the betterment of all.

The building was funded through the joint Canada-Saskatchewan Agri-Food Innovation Fund, the AFIF. It was built on land provided by Canada's Semi-arid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre, the SPARC.

Together, Wheatland and SPARC have shared resources and facilities in research dedicated to areas of specific interest to farmers in southwest Saskatchewan such as soil salinity and soil conservation. This building will assist them in their important work.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one example of how the AFIF is promoting the Saskatchewan economy and Saskatchewan producers, and I invite all hon. members to show their approval.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Royal Honour for Regina Golf Club

Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the Regina Golf Club has received Royal Assent and is thus officially changing its name to the Royal Regina Golf Club.

The road to Royal Assent began last year during the club's 100th anniversary. The club pursued this honour through the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. The request was then passed on to the Governor General of Canada and in turn to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Royal Regina Golf Club has enjoyed a celebrated history in the Queen City. The club originated on May 6, 1899, making it the oldest golf club in the province. In 1910 it moved to its present location next to the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) training academy. And the Regina Golf Club was officially incorporated by an Act in the legislature in 1923. As mentioned earlier, the club celebrated its 100th anniversary last year.

The Royal Regina Golf Club will be one of only five official royal golf clubs in Canada which the last one being designated in 1931 which was the Royal Colwood in Victoria, BC (British Columbia).

The other royal clubs are the Royal Montreal, Royal Quebec, and Royal Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Royal Regina Golf Club on this illustrious honour.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Fees for Long-Term Care Homes

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, another day, another tax grab in NDP (New Democratic Party) Saskatchewan. Today they have stooped to a new low. This time it's a direct attack on Saskatchewan seniors — seniors in long-term care homes.

A single senior, with about \$2,300 of monthly income, will see their fees jump by nearly \$500 — \$500 a month, Mr. Speaker. It's in the NDP so-called tax cut budget.

I would ask the Premier to answer for his government. Mr. Premier, what on earth are you doing? How could you possibly justify this massive attack on Saskatchewan seniors?

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we announced two changes to the long-term care fee structure. The first one: some nursing home residents in the higher income group will see their maximum increase as of the fall of this year. But of the 9,000 long-term care residents we have in Saskatchewan, 80 per cent of those will see no changes.

The second change we'll be making will be affecting married couples who now will have another option of how to divide their income which will be calculated for their long-term care fees.

And as I said before, Mr. Speaker, 80 per cent of long-term care residents will see no change in their fee structure, and the 20 per cent who do see a change will see it begin this fall.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed that the Premier didn't answer the question and account for his government's actions.

I want to tell you how out of touch this government is; this morning the Associate Minister of Health said that this increase will only affect seniors who can afford it. She then proceeded to hand out figures showing that a senior with just \$28,000 a year in income would be hit with a \$5,600 increase. Only the NDP would think that somebody with a \$28,000 could afford a \$5,600 tax grab.

Mr. Premier, that is absolutely obscene. You're telling low-income seniors to drain every dime they have in their bank account while you sit on a \$405 million liquor and gaming fund. What is wrong with you people? How can you possibly justify this obscene attack on low-income seniors?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The long-term sector in our health system is quite significantly subsidized by

this government. Over 70 per cent of the long-term care costs are subsidized by the government. An average cost of a long-term care bed is \$3,500; at the very maximum, no one will be made to pay more than \$1,500.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to the Premier and I say to his government, by his own record they are jacking up long-term care fees by as much as \$469 a month, and that's over \$5,600 a year for seniors with modest incomes.

And you have the nerve to send out a pamphlet bragging about a \$500 tax cut for seniors. Have you lost all sense of right and wrong? Mr. Premier, you had the nerve to call this an historical budget, but it's an historical attack on Saskatchewan seniors.

Mr. Premier, take some responsibility, take control of your tax-hungry government, and cancel this attack on Saskatchewan seniors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, when I phoned some of the seniors' organizations to alert them to this change, many of them said it's still very cheap, and that's very reasonable. So I think that what we have to remember is that 80 per cent of our seniors that are in long-term care will not see a change — 80 per cent of them will not see any change. The 20 per cent that will see a change are in the higher income groups, and that's what's significant about this announcement today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I say again to the Premier, if he's listening, Saskatchewan people are reeling from one tax grab after another that's hidden in your government's budget. The PST tax grab; the student loan tax grab; the property tax grab; the camping tax grab; and now the seniors tax grab. Every day there's a new ugly surprise for Saskatchewan taxpayers and it begs the question, what's next?

But when we ask the Minister of Finance to come clean and tell us what other tax grabs are hidden in his budget, he says that's not my job. He says it's the opposition's job to tell the public about all the hidden tax grabs in his budget. So much for an open, accountable government.

Mr. Premier, will you come clean? What further tax grabs are hidden in your budget?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, in the tradition of the new so-called Saskatchewan Party and its predecessor party, the Tory Party, follows a very funny, follows a very funny path, follows a very funny path . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear the answer. They just simply want to shout me down. And if that's the case, then I'm not going to bother trying to give . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I can't hear myself speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. I just ask members to kindly allow the

answers to be heard. The questions are allowed to be heard; allow the answers to be heard, please, for the benefit of everybody in the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'll be very brief in the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There they go again. There they go again. Logic doesn't prevail; reason doesn't prevail. Bully tactics in this legislature they hope will prevail — they will not prevail in this Legislative Assembly.

What will prevail is the truth. And the truth of the matter is that that group over there wants to increase spending well in excess of a billion dollars and argue all the while that they can have a tax cut, that they can have a balanced budget, and that they can pay down the debt; and, Mr. Speaker, if you believe that I've got one of several bridges in Saskatoon I can sell you.

It's phony math; it's Tory math. It didn't work in the 1980s and it isn't working right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker. The Premier thinks we're upset. He's absolutely right we're upset. We're upset because he's taxing seniors and long-term care homes. We have every right to be upset as every Saskatchewan resident is.

It turns out there's 45 separate fee hikes in the Department of Environment and Resource Management alone — 45 increases in that department ranging from 9 to 150 per cent. And why didn't the Environment minister tell us about them? He says because nobody asked.

If the NDP . . . (inaudible) . . . don't ask, don't tell policy, if we don't say anything, maybe nobody will notice how we're taxing the life out of this province.

Mr. Premier, we are asking. Earlier today the Saskatchewan Party tabled written questions asking for a list of hidden tax grabs in every one of your departments. But why don't you just make it easy. Why don't you release those tax grabs today? Give us the list. Mr. Premier, will you tell us what else you're hiding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition in the Saskatchewan Party, the so-called Saskatchewan Party, as its predecessor the Tory Party that governed from 1982 to 1991, has the same consistent habit now for the last 15, 20 years. And their argument is to say that every fee for usage of a park is a tax. Their argument is that every rate charged for a public utility is a tax.

If that utility was owned privately they wouldn't say it was a tax, they would say it's a fee. But the fact that it's owned publicly, it's a tax. Under these people's maths, which is the old Tory math, everything is a tax. Not a charge. Not a fee. Not something to be used and be paid for under normal usages.

Yesterday they raised the question of the parks fees and they said the advisory committee hadn't even been consulted. And the Chair of the advisory committee said he had been consulted and not only that but the fees were reasonable. Everything that

is there is reasonable. We're not going to go back to the days of your math of nearly bankrupting this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fees In Tourism Industry

Mr. Kwiatkowski: —Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Environment Minister. Mr. Minister, there aren't many areas of Saskatchewan's economy that haven't been hammered by NDP taxes, but one area that has been able to bob and weave through the barrage of taxes is our tourism industry.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this year's budget caught the tourism industry with a stiff left-hand to the jaw as well. That's what 45 fee increases will do to tourism in Saskatchewan's parks and resorts.

Mr. Minister, here's what the resort owners, LeRoy and Brenda James wrote about the \$450,000 baseball bat your government took to park and fishing fees:

As a resort owner in the Meadow Lake Provincial Park, I am once again embarrassed by our government. With summer just around the corner, I have the duty to inform our customers that, along with the 40 per cent increase they must pay to enter the provincial park, it will also cost them 155 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, please, I would ask the member to go directly to his question please.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: —

. . . to purchase a fishing licence when they get there.

Mr. Minister, how do you explain this latest tax grab to LeRoy and Brenda and the thousands of other people who have to serve our tourism industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again there's a lot of howling going across the street about tax grabs and what I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, to the member is that parks in this province cost \$13.6 million to operate. This province grants \$5.1 million to cover those costs. The rest are coming from park fees.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed, this government is committed to our park system. And I say today that the \$2 . . . the one . . . the \$2 increase on a daily entry into the park is not as significant as the . . . as the \$15 billion debt that your party left us in, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another question for the Environment minister. Mr. Minister, I don't know which is worse — that you pummelled the tourism industry with massive tax increases for park fees and licences, or the fact that you tried to inflict the tax increase without telling anyone.

Mr. Minister, here's what the owners of the Big Island Cove Resort at the Meadow Lake Provincial Park had to say about the 45 fee increases you tried to slip through in the dark of the night.

This is a lose-lose situation for everyone involved. The province will see a decrease in licence revenues, struggling resort operators will see a reduction in rentals, and ultimately tourism in Saskatchewan will decline.

Mr. Minister, will you admit that your foiled attempt to secretly inflict a massive increase in park and licensing fees is going to be a disaster? And will you immediately rescind these unnecessary tax increases on our tourism industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the answer is no I will not.

Mr. Speaker, these increases result in approximately 708,000 in new revenues from the users and this province is putting 532,000 additional dollars into the provincial parks.

Mr. Speaker, this money is used for our parks system. And once again, I go back to our earlier point that we have a beautiful province. We have a beautiful park system. And we are prepared not only to ask the users to chip in to cover some of the 1 and \$2 costs, this province is also putting money where their mouth is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Police Services

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Government.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's secret assault on property taxpayers continues. A few days ago we heard from the Education minister telling school divisions, if you don't like it, raise the mill rate.

Now villages and RMs (rural municipality) are being told the NDP is unloading \$4 million worth of policing costs on them. For most RMs that translates into a tax increase of between 1 to 2 mills. For villages it means a massive property tax increase or it means forced amalgamation. Are those the options the NDP would recommend to municipalities trying to cope with the latest NDP downloading — amalgamation or increased property taxation?

Mr. Minister, how do you suggest that municipalities pay for a massive \$4 million NDP download?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And to the member, first I want to say to the member that if he were to read the information as to how the \$4 million arrived in that particular pool, what he would see that in 1995 there was the committee that was established of which SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan

Association of Rural Municipalities) were a part of.

And over that period of time, that committee decided that there would need to be an increase in fees for policing across the province. That increase in fees across the province showed that there would need to be an additional \$4 million that would have to come from small towns and villages who weren't participating in that contribution.

After the review was completed, this administration said, over a period of time we would cover off the \$4 million until such point as there would be a mitigating period. That mitigating period, sir, is now completed and those municipalities that were not paying that \$4 million are now absorbing that within their own budgets.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, another question to the Minister of Municipal Government. Mr. Minister, no amount of NDP baffle-gab changes the fact that your budget downloads \$4 million of policing costs on municipalities. It's another little tidbit the Finance minister forgot to put into the budget speech.

Mr. Minister, when were you planning on telling municipal taxpayers their property taxes were going up? When you were boasting last week about your so-called tax cuts, why didn't you also announce that you plan on slashing \$4 million from the budget for municipal policing?

Is the NDP's idea of beefing up policing services in Saskatchewan cutting \$4 million from policing budget and then telling municipalities to raise taxes to make up the difference?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, to the member, if you were to review the budget more fully and more clearly, what you would see is that a portion of those policing costs have now gone to the municipalities and over to Justice, Mr. Speaker.

And what's happened, of course, is that what you're seeing is that you are seeing a broadened and expanded service to rural Saskatchewan through the Justice department in its additional policing. So in the province today we add an additional 25 police officers, of which rural Saskatchewan's going to see in proportion about 16 of those.

And you say to us that that's not a sufficient investment in policing the province. I say to the member opposite, just review the budget, see that those services are going to be provided now in a broader way in rural Saskatchewan by additional policing officers. Go back to your community and ask them whether or not they don't support additional policing services in their areas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, another question to the Minister of Municipal Government. Mr. Minister, it may come to a shock to you to find out that Saskatchewan is currently facing more than 100 RCMP vacancies — not additions, vacancies. That's 100 fewer police officers on the street. And

it's a long way from the NDP campaign promise to increase the number of police officers in Saskatchewan by 200 — not 25 — 200.

How many municipalities are being told their policing funding is being slashed \$4 million to zero? Mr. Minister, how does your decision to cut police funding by \$4 million with your campaign . . . square up with your campaign promise of adding 200 more police offices? And how are municipalities supposed to cope with this last, broken NDP campaign promise?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I think I should clarify the member's understanding of what is happening with regards to policing in Saskatchewan. The government is committed to 200 new police officers over the next four years, 25 are in place . . . will be in place this year, Mr. Speaker. And the party opposite, Mr. Speaker, in the campaign, of course committed not one penny to Justice, not one penny to police. There would not be one extra police officer on the street if that party opposite was in government, Mr. Speaker.

By the end of this year I should also add, there will be almost no vacancies in the RCMP contingent. Mr. Speaker, we have filled . . . we have seen 40 RCMP vacancies filled since October. We will see the rest of them filled by the end of the year, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there will be 300 more police officers on the street this year than there were last year, Mr. Speaker. That's our commitment to rural Saskatchewan and to urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Amalgamation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs also. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents are very concerned about this government's heavy-handed interest in forced municipal amalgamation. Attendance has been very high at the public task force meetings being held around the province. Thousands of people have turned out to express their concern over Mr. Garcea's interim report and about the NDP forcing amalgamation upon them.

But, Mr. Speaker, the minister is telling the media he will make a recommendation to cabinet before the end of this month. He will begin preparing legislation before Mr. Garcea's final report is out.

Mr. Speaker, what's the rush? Mr. Minister, will you commit right now not to bring in legislation forcing amalgamation on municipalities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that he should look at what's happened in this province over the past 10 years. Because over the past 10 years both the organizations of SUMA and SARM have been calling for changes to the structure of municipalities.

Municipalities have been asking for, both SUMA and SARM, Mr. Speaker, have been asking for greater autonomy, they've

been asking for greater revenue sharing, they've been asking for greater opportunities for them to provide a broader range of services in this province.

And that's why today, Mr. Speaker, municipalities asked for the . . . asked in this province that you have a study. And that's why Mr. Garcea and his committee are travelling the province today to respond to the kinds of questions that municipalities have been asking for.

And we're listening and we're paying attention to what they're saying, and we'll be providing that kind of information in the future as soon as we have some opportunity to wait for the completion of those reviews.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today a cartoon in *The Leader-Post* I think sums up the whole story. It's a depiction of the Premier walking Saskatchewan residents into the black hole of municipal amalgamation. And I quote from the cartoon. It says:

Trust me, we must walk this road for our own good. I mean, have I ever misled you before?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, does the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program cancellation or hospital closures ring a bell?

To the Minister of Municipal Government: who are you drafting forced amalgamation legislation for — to improve the lives of RM people or town people, or to have more control for your NDP government and find a new way of downloading?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has spent many years in the municipal system, as I have, and understands the kinds of issues and pressures that exist in the municipal system. And he understands that too.

And the members also understands that, having been a member of SARM and SUMA that I've been, that they've been asking for a long period of time, Mr. Speaker, for greater authority, for greater responsibility, greater share of the revenue.

And today, Mr. Speaker, we have the mechanism in place which is examining how in fact that process could take place. And we've said to that committee, Mr. Speaker, which comprises people from SUMA and SARM, to respond to what the people of Saskatchewan are saying to them, and they're there. They're in those town halls listening to them and we're paying attention to that message.

And I say to the member opposite, that review is under way. In a couple of days they'll be finished their work, and I'll provide you with the information that I too have gleaned from listening to people across the province on the municipal issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tax Increases

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, it's been a few days now since the budget's been tabled. Already a number of tax increases, tax grabs, have come to light.

Today we vote on the budget, and I think it would be very proper if the Premier, in light of the shocking revelations like the tax grab on seniors and long-term care homes being revealed today, I think it would be appropriate if the Premier would agree to respect this House and to table in this House any future or further tax grabs that have been hidden away in his budget.

I invite him to do that today to benefit the people of Saskatchewan who are wondering exactly what he is up to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this is the day that we're going to be voting on the budget. And what the Leader of the Opposition and the members of the so-called Saskatchewan Party are desperately trying to do during this debate — because they have nothing else to attack in substance in major policy on this budget — is to try to concoct the argument that, for example, a fee for park usage is a tax, or that a fee for coyotes is a tax, or power bills is a tax, in order to find some thinly disguised basis to vote against this budget, all the while not offering any positive, concrete alternative.

In fact, as will be demonstrated later this afternoon by the Minister of Finance when he speaks, not only no alternative, except the alternative of \$1.2 billion extra more expenditures, driving this province right back to the brink of bankruptcy.

That's their choice. Ours is the honest choice for people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 17 — The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Cline, seconded by the Hon. Mr. Romanow that this Assembly do now resolve itself into the

Committee of Finance, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Hermanson.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to join this debate on behalf of all my constituents because I've been hearing from them a great deal the last few days, not only strictly on budget, but on a number of other things this government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, when I became a candidate for the Saskatchewan Party prior to last year's election, the people at the door were telling me they were supporting the Saskatchewan Party because they simply did not trust the NDP any longer to do what was necessary in order to get the province, the whole province, back on track.

They were telling me that in order to get Saskatchewan moving in the right direction, the government has to realize that they can simply not continue to pick the pockets of every man, woman, in Saskatchewan clean. Mr. Speaker, a strong economy cannot be built upon the government with hundreds of millions of dollars stuffed away in this slush fund or that slush fund waiting for a politically opportune time to spend it.

One thing this government still does not get is the fact that just because government considers itself doing financially well, doesn't mean people in the province feel it. And in the discovery of \$700 million extra cash, this government is doing very well financially. If only the people of Saskatchewan could share that good news today. If only they weren't asked by the members opposite to simply trust them, relief is on its way.

Not surprising, Mr. Speaker, after being beaten about the wallet for years and years and years, this government . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, please. Order. I'm just going to ask members to please pay attention to the presentations being made. The noise is just a little bit above the level that allows people to hear the presentation.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, after being beaten about the wallets for years and years and years, this government, they simply don't believe they'll see the relief of any kind over the next year or the next four years.

They've just seen this play one too many times, Mr. Speaker — one of the big reasons I am standing here today with 24 other Saskatchewan Party MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) serving with a party that got the highest percentage of popular vote in the election.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP always remind me of a horse with . . . an old horse with blinders. They say they have vision, but it's only tunnel vision, and I would suggest this government doesn't look beyond the Saskatchewan boundaries.

I'd like to take the horse thing just one step further. When a horse is spooked, you then put a bag over its head, and you can lead that horse almost anywhere. And I would suggest the members opposite have all put a bag over their heads because of their fright at the last poll, the last election, and the blind is now leading the blind.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: — People of Saskatchewan are tired of having NDP obviously feeling entitlement when it comes to people's cheque books. After years and years of NDP take and take and take, and then when they promise to take a little less four years from now, they act as if they're doing the people a favour.

They wonder why the public aren't falling on their knees in thanksgiving. That's how arrogant this government has become. In fact I would suggest to you the NDP was the birthplace of the word arrogant.

People really did want to believe in the NDP near-death experience in September and would have made them really sit up and take notice of what the people are really saying. No such luck, Mr. Speaker.

As soon as the Liberals signed the bottom line and gave the Premier back his majority, against the will of the public, it was business as usual for these members. Same old I-know-best quality that was seen, that we've seen since 1991.

Well, the people said in September and they continue to say it today, the NDP doesn't know best. But if for once they actually stopped to listen to the people they would figure it out what was best.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economy is built upon people having financial viability to take care of themselves and their families. An economy built upon business sector having confidence in what they will be able to do, that they will be able to survive through simple hard work and initiative and not have to constantly worry about government that seems intent on doing everything in its power to stifle business and opportunities in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has got to be one of the few places in this country or even on this continent where government really believes it can get away with telling people yes, they will get a tax cut but only if the residents accept a tax increase first; that they will be able to keep more of their paycheques in a few years, but in the meantime they're going to fork over more and even more.

But that is NDP logic, Mr. Speaker. Just as it's NDP logic when they raise the provincial sales tax to 9 per cent from 7 per cent, then they took it back to 7 some years later. They called it a tax cut. And that's what we see here again, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard promises to reduce income tax some years down the line, and if they really actually follow through, Mr. Speaker — and that's a big if — it will be positive. However, offsetting this positive impact is the immediate increase in the provincial sales tax. Well they don't call it an increase, it's an expansion. Call it what you will; it means that as of midnight Friday, people in Saskatchewan were paying more taxes.

Since the budget, calls into our offices here in Regina and back in our constituencies have been unbelievable. People are angry, Mr. Speaker, very angry. While we made our position to this expansion known for quite some time, I think even many of us on this side of the House have been surprised by the level of

anger and cynicism we are hearing from the people of Saskatchewan over this budget.

They see it for what it is — a last minute tax grab before any form of tax relief kicks in; the last chance to raid the public wallets. And they don't believe at the end of the day, even four years from now, that they will see any real savings. People throughout this province are absolutely convinced that members opposite will find a way to get this money back from them somehow.

Utility rate increases, increases in licences, increases in government fees — people who have called me and have called my colleagues just take it as a matter of course that all these things will be going up to recoup any potential tax saving for people. And I think they're probably right.

In fact I wouldn't be surprised that very shortly we will see these things start happening. In fact, they already have. In the last couple of months alone, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the government boost rates for two of our Crown corporations for an additional \$40 million. And what do you know, Mr. Speaker, that's about the same amount the government projects as tax relief this year. Funny how it works, isn't it.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents are very, very angry and very worried about the NDP PST expansion. The Battleford-Cut Knife constituency is on the west side of our province and the people are already voting on this budget by making the short trip into Alberta to escape the PST. This expansion has only served to make them even more determined to make their major purchases outside of Saskatchewan.

And I since I don't expect the member from North Battleford to raise these concerns like he used to, I will be speaking on behalf of that city as well. It's not a secret to anyone how much business North Battleford and Battleford lose because of the PST.

An hour's trip up the highway takes the people to the tax-free zone, Mr. Speaker. The businesses and residents both in Battleford-Cut Knife and North Battleford are telling me that this move on behalf of the government will ring every last tax dollar out of us. It will make business on the west side even less competitive than they were before.

I would be very interested in hearing from the member from North Battleford on what his constituents are telling him about this budget. However, I really don't expect him to . . . (inaudible) . . . really speaks out about any of the issues in his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, government revenue is projected to rise over a half a billion dollars this year. And this government can see fit in giving back a whopping \$40 million, excluding utility rate hikes, which basically reduces this year's tax saving to zero. Mr. Speaker, that simply isn't good enough for the people of this province who have been sacrificing for so long.

And what is the government doing with this huge increase in government revenue? Since they're not giving it back to the people, one only can guess, because it doesn't look like it's going into our essential services.

On a daily basis we continue to hear the members opposite talk about the so-called plan of the Saskatchewan Party to freeze spending in areas such as health care and education. And of course that isn't what we campaigned on, but those members have said it so often, some of them might even start believing it.

Actually we campaigned on stable, predictable funding increases tied to the rate of inflation. In fact the government has not even come close to matching this. Direct increases to health districts have increased less than 1 per cent in this budget, Mr. Speaker — less than 1 per cent. Of course there is money that's being put into the health care transitional fund, most of which comes from the federal government. Now the government hasn't explained what this money is going to be used for.

But it seems to me that the word "transitional" has replaced the word "reform" as the NDP's code for hospital closures and service reductions. In fact some people have already nicknamed this account the hospital closure fund, Mr. Speaker.

And we hear the Health minister echoing precisely what we said during the campaign — that we've simply got to figure out to spend the current health care budgets better. And we absolutely agree with that, Mr. Speaker. In fact the minister has even gone so far as to suggest a review of health care spending be conducted. And we agree with that as well, Mr. Speaker.

It just seems a little ironic that the Minister of Health is suggesting this now as a good idea. I seem to recall last year when we were proposing such a review they said it was one of the worst ideas in the world. And now the minister seems to like it.

(1445)

Beyond health care, Mr. Speaker, one other major concern of the people of my constituency is education. Once again we hear the members opposite say that we would have frozen education fund. Again this is nonsense. It is interesting to note, had the Education budget simply increased at the rate of inflation since 1991, the system would be better off to the tune of nearly \$400 and then our mill rates wouldn't have had to shoot through the sky.

Any government that speaks about vision for the future, education simply cannot be left out of the equation. Yet from what we hear from SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and the teachers' federation, this government has done just that.

Those organizations, which often don't agree, do agree on this point, Mr. Speaker — that this budget has forsaken both children and of course local taxpayers, because depending where you are, one or the other is going to get a hit. Either education will suffer or the taxes will go up because of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, the SSTA has given this budget a failing grade. Not only will it not cover the general rising costs of education, it probably will not cover the entire cost of the new teachers' contract, which the government will work out with STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), and since the end of the protocol agreement with SSTA will have only limited say on

the final contract. But they will have to foot the entire bill.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the government is off-loading its responsibility for education onto the local school divisions and onto local taxpayers, which is somewhat surprising given who we have for a Minister of Education.

When the member was the Leader of the Liberal Party instead of a second-tier cabinet minister in the worn out NDP government, he decried the NDP's off-loading of education costs. He said the fact that 60 per cent of the cost of education is now being picked up by local taxpayers was wrong and he would, in government, strive to bring that percentage down.

And now look what happened, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal leader, now the Minister of Education, walks out into the hallway and announced not only that 60 per cent is fair, it may not even be high enough. Just like how his promise to get rid of patronage appointment became a vow to hire more hacks was reversed so that his concern for . . . and so has his concern for property tax.

He is now urging school boards to raise their mill rates. Simply incredible. In the wake of tax revolt meetings around the province, this minister is advocating throwing gasoline onto the fire, Mr. Speaker. How inept can a single cabinet minister be, Mr. Speaker? How unprincipled can the minister be, Mr. Speaker, to simply turn his back on his entire election campaign and now advocate higher property taxes?

Well the view from his cabinet office must be pretty good, Mr. Speaker, because it certainly has made him forget all about the things he said he once stood for.

Well I'll say it to the rumoured Leader of the Liberal Party. He shouldn't get too used to his big office and growing staff. Either the Premier's going to tire of the Liberal leader's talent for sticking his foot in his mouth or the voters are going to tire of it by the next election rolls around. One way or the other, his stay in this job is going to be short-lived.

Mr. Speaker, although it probably wasn't in the NDP's game plan, this admission by the Minister of Education that the government is simply planning to download more of the tax burden onto the local taxpayer is at least a bit of honesty by one of the members opposite.

It shows how they operate. Cut this tax. Raise that tax. Give a rebate on property taxes. Force school boards to raise the mill rate. Same old story, Mr. Speaker: put it in one hand and take it out with the other.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, I want to take the opportunity to say a few words about the NDP's plan for imposing its will on municipal government. Mr. Speaker, this exercise is one of the most cynical I've seen, Mr. Speaker.

As a former SARM board director I think I know something about local government, and I have a few urban councillors on this side as well. I think we even have a current mayor here. There's a great amount of experience over here dealing with local government, and the NDP has painted this picture for the benefit of those people who are not familiar with local governments.

This picture is false. They have told people, particularly in larger centres, that local governments are simply a waste of tax money and one of the reasons property taxes are so high. Mr. Speaker, they know this is untrue yet they keep saying it.

It is one of their plans to make the perceived rural/urban split very real. They can no longer count on us splitting the vote with the Liberals since the NDP, along with the leader of the Liberals, have pretty well killed the Liberal Party off. So the NDP game plan for the next election is to intensify the rural/urban split which they have created over the last nine years. It's cheap, cynical politics beneath contempt.

They have given no evidence that this will save money. They have not shown how this will improve services, but what they have done is tell the people in cities that this will save them money, even though the government knows this is likely not true.

It's shameful, Mr. Speaker, because they know as well as I that there's a great deal of co-operation right now. There's amalgamation going on, but this government wants these local governments wiped out immediately because they want more and more power concentrated and centralized where they feel comfortable — in the cities.

The NDP no longer has any interest in attracting the support of rural areas. They've written these seats off, and in doing so, are trying to write the future of rural Saskatchewan. I mean if the NDP were so interested in promoting co-operation and amalgamation, why have they not amended the municipal Acts that currently make it all but impossible for amalgamation between certain types of municipalities. Why not make the legislation friendly toward voluntary amalgamation and then trust the local leaders, the people who run the most efficient governments in the province, to use their own judgment to decide the future course of local governments.

Don't force amalgamation, whether it makes sense or not, to fit your political agenda. Make local governments . . . let local governments which have kept their affairs in order for so long determine their future. Makes sense? That makes sense to me, but only if your goal is to actually come up with a more efficient local government. They have plenty of effective . . . they're plenty effective right now.

And I know if there were a way to deliver services cheaper and better, local governments' leaders wouldn't hesitate for a moment to follow this course. But if your goal is simply to strip away the voice of rural Saskatchewan, the NDP approach to forced amalgamation and heavy-handed government may prove most effective. Mr. Speaker, but there's no doubt in my mind what the goal of this government is when it comes to rural Saskatchewan. And I would suggest that we name — rename the Garcea report, the hon. member from Yorkton report.

Mr. Speaker, to close, the people of my riding don't like this budget; they don't like the so-called NDP vision; they don't like this government and the reason is they don't trust this government. And so far in this term the NDP has not given my constituents any reason to trust them.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment to this budget.

I will not be supporting the budget itself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on the first budget, the first of many of our coalition government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — When I was first sworn in as a member of this Legislative Assembly I stated that Saskatchewan had entered a new era — one that was marked by co-operation and consensus rather than opposition and conflict. This budget, the first of the Liberal-NDP coalition government, is a testament to this new era, an era of acknowledging different interests in our shared pursuit of providing the people of this great province with effective, responsible government.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency of Saskatoon Northwest, there are many people representative of all kinds of interests. There are professionals and there are entrepreneurs. There are farmers and blue-collar workers. There are those of them with young children and there are those of them with older children attending college or university.

These people understand the importance of balancing a budget. They, too, have to make decisions each day that ensure that their own financial house remains in order and they deserve the same from their government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — They, like all Saskatchewan people, understand the importance of taking a balanced approach when making decisions regarding the province's finances. They understand the importance of addressing debt, a debt that their children and their children's children will face in the years to come because of past governments.

They understand the importance of investing in health, highways and education. Investments that will ensure a bright, sustainable future for the years to come. And they also understand that we must provide support to our hardworking farm families while also reducing our tax load.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that this budget speaks to the people of Saskatchewan. I believe that the coalition Government of Saskatchewan has presented a fair, responsible budget that will lead Saskatchewan into the new millennium.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — I am particularly proud in how the coalition partners worked together to create this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — It is one that reflects the platform and

priorities of both parties on this side of the House in areas that include health, agriculture, education and tax relief.

When asked yesterday evening, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood indicated that they too have a plan for these areas, particularly in the area of post-secondary education. In his remarks he stated that he would get to it and then he never got to it. Mr. Speaker, perhaps he clings to the old adage of silence is golden because we're still waiting.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is good for my constituents and it is good for the people of Saskatchewan. It makes progress on the debt. It invests in priorities like health, highways and education. And it helps support farm families while providing broad-based tax relief.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — We have also done other things to improve the lives of Saskatchewan citizens. We have provided an additional \$63 million for health care, an additional 50 million out of the transition fund, and an additional 100 of that 150 million for health transition — a total of \$213 million for health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Two hundred and fifty million dollars for highways — the largest ever investment ever in Highways and Transportation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — And we have reformed our province's tax system so that it is fair, simple, and competitive. Mr. Speaker, we did this by eliminating the flat tax, the debt reduction tax, the high income surtax over the next three years, reducing provincial income tax, and introducing the significantly higher personal tax credits so all Saskatchewan families could benefit from a tax cut.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — These changes represent the largest single reduction in income tax Saskatchewan has ever seen.

The members opposite should be rejoicing, yet unfortunately, bat boy Brad and catfish Carl remain stuck on fish, coyotes, ball bearings, and drill bits. They can't get the big picture here. These individuals try to develop credibility in light of their platform that said nothing — shameful behaviour, shameful.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that this budget provides \$50 million over two years in targeted property tax relief for the farm community, and the coalition government has eliminated the provincial tax on farm fuel it's buying.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — This budget also improves access to

post-secondary education with the creation of a post-secondary education tax credit for graduates, increased operating and capital grants to post-secondary institutions, more money for technology-enhanced learning, and more support for persons with disabilities to access post-secondary education and training.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Education, I am particularly proud of how this budget invests in K to 12 education. Since becoming minister I've had the opportunity to meet with teachers, school trustees, administrators, and parents from across Saskatchewan. They have told me the importance of increased funding to K to 12 education. They have told me about the pressures on rural school boards due to demographic shifts and declining enrolments. They have told me about the increased demands on school divisions to accommodate the diverse needs of students in their classrooms — special needs students, Indian and Metis students, and students that are at risk due to a variety of societal pressures and failures.

They have told me of the need to support core curriculum actualization. And they have told me of the need to invest in capital infrastructure to ensure that Saskatchewan students have safe, healthy, learning environments.

Mr. Speaker, this budget responds to those concerns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — We have provided an increase in the foundation operating grant for school divisions. The grant for year 2000 is the largest amount the province has ever provided to support students and teachers in Saskatchewan schools.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — In addition school divisions will also receive \$5.3 million in grants in lieu of taxes — an increase of 1.9 million from last year.

Within the foundation operating grant, we have also provided a number of enhancements to support educational priorities.

This budget substantially increases the recognition for special needs students — over \$14 million. This additional recognition will help schools and school divisions provide an enriched classroom experience to our special needs students.

We have also enhanced funding to our community school pre-kindergarten program. We are expanding our program for, in 13 schools, to serve twice the number of children at each of these 13 locations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — We are also enhancing the community schools program in northern Saskatchewan. The community schools program helped provide northern students

with an education that reflects their histories, experiences, and learning needs.

We are increasing our investment in learning technology to help prepare Saskatchewan students for life beyond school in this increasingly electronic and competitive world and addressing, addressing the distances in rural Saskatchewan where learning technology is vital.

Mr. Speaker, this endeavour particularly benefits students in all the rural areas. We are investing in capital infrastructure to provide our students with safe and well-equipped environments in which to learn. And I am proud to say that just today I had the pleasure of announcing that we will be building two new elementary schools in Saskatoon — announced today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, with a 20 per cent increase in our financial support for school capital project, I am also pleased to say that 115 communities throughout Saskatchewan will also receive capital support this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Would I have liked to do more? Of course. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe this budget accurately reflects the co-operation between the coalition partners and is fiscally responsible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — The commitments my party made during the last provincial election are reflected within the coalition context. They are reflected in some of the innovations on property tax rebates, on fuel tax relief, on income tax breaks, assistance for post-secondary students, more money for health, and best of all, more money for K to 12 education.

These two parties talked about K to 12 education. The members opposite did not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, we believe that education is a priority, not an afterthought. We had the foresight to develop a platform that included our children.

What is the opposition's plan, Mr. Speaker? Well, Mr. Speaker, like their plan for post-secondary education so articulately detailed yesterday evening by the Post-Secondary Education critic from Last Mountain-Touchwood, they'll get back to us.

I recall looking for the opposition's plan for K to 12 prior to the last provincial election. I waited for it during the election and never saw it. And, Mr. Speaker, their silence told me just how important children were to them. Their response was to freeze spending in education.

Cost of living is a freeze. Nothing for special needs. Nothing for the North. Nothing for capital projects. Nothing for education property tax relief. Nothing for teachers' salaries. And nothing

for the children in this province. Shameful.

Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I'm being a little bit too unkind in my comments. Now I suspect, now I suspect that they had, and continue to have, a plan for our children. When the member opposite from Kelvington-Wadena addressed the SSTA at their convention in Saskatoon, she suggested that the Education budget should be double.

Mr. Speaker, I almost fell over. Perhaps the time spent with my party was not entirely wasted — children are important. Perhaps they were finally going to think about our children and perhaps they had a plan.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't until this House resumed sitting that their plan, an insidious plan, became even more apparent. During the short time this House has been sitting, the members opposite have proposed an additional \$1.2 billion in new spending — \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker.

It is now that I realize what the members opposite intend to do for our children and our children's future is this. Mortgage it, Mr. Speaker. They want to mortgage our children's future. Unacceptable. Totally unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, we are all too familiar with the role some of the members opposite played in creating the monstrous debt that almost crippled our province. A beast that they now want to let out of the box.

Mr. Speaker, we are on to them and we are on to their games. One point two billion dollars in fiscally irresponsible spending sounds a lot to me like devine inspiration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — I commend my coalition partners for their hard work in saving our province from the brink of bankruptcy. And as a partner in this coalition government, I will fight and fight hard to ensure that the province of our children remains on sound financial footing.

I find it ironic that the opposition even has an Education critic. One day they propose nothing in the area of K to 12 spending and the next day the Education critic wants to double it.

Double or nothing, Mr. Speaker. That's what they propose. Well double or nothing is not a game we can afford to play with our children's lives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, this budget is responsive while remaining responsible. The first budget of the coalition government, the first budget of the new millennium. I am proud to support this budget. And I will not be supporting the Sask-a-Tory's amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great

interest to the member's comments and I'm sure people all across Saskatchewan are watching it with great interest as well.

You have to ask yourself, Mr. Speaker, whether this was a good budget. That's the question that will be before the House before long this afternoon. Was this a good budget for the people of Saskatchewan?

I voted . . . You will know, Mr. Speaker, that I voted one time before for an NDP budget because there was a real tax cut in that budget. That was a number of years ago.

It took me two more years . . . it took two years in my constituency to convince everyone that I hadn't lost control of my faculties. We won't be doing it again, simply won't be doing it again.

In this budget there are all kinds of things that people are learning of in the last few days about. Tax increases that were hidden.

The Premier stands in his place today in the legislature and says, it's not a tax if it's a charge. It's not a tax if it's a fee. It's not a tax if it's a utility rate. When it's coming out of your pocket, when it's coming out of your pocket, does it really make any difference what the NDP want to call it? No.

But what it means at the end of the day is you have less money in your pocket to use for the things that you want. To use for the priorities for your family and to use for the priorities of your business and to use for the priorities of your farm. Those are the kinds of things that the people of this province are concerned about. Those are the kinds of things that miss the mark in this budget. Those are the kinds of things that people all across this province have given this budget a failing grade about.

And when you look at the various departments across the piece, my critic responsibilities are in the area of agriculture. And there are a couple of things that will benefit agriculture. And we might as well be upfront about them.

First and foremost, there's the fuel tax . . . gasoline tax rebate and farmers will benefit to a modest degree in terms of that. There's no question about that. There's no question about that — very modestly they'll benefit.

Also there is the tax rebate in terms of property tax and that will be a positive thing, that'll be a positive thing.

And I'll explain to the member from Regina South as to reasons why I won't vote for the budget. Even though there are those two things that will help in terms of agriculture, there's a whole load of things that are going to hurt.

And those are in the areas of fee increases. Those are in the area of utility rate increases. Those are in the rate of all kinds of charges. Those are taxes. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Premier, those are taxes and the people all across Saskatchewan know that they're taxes.

Mr. Boyd: — People all across Saskatchewan know that all of the good that there is in the budget has been lost in recent days because of all of the things that are just coming forward now.

Fee increases, taxes, utility rate increases. All of those kinds . . . the four hundred bucks that you may have got on your farm for property tax rebate are all gone in one fell swoop in terms of things like utility rate increases. All of those are gone.

And on top of that, we have an Education minister in this province that says to the school boards all across Saskatchewan: if you don't like the budget, if you don't like what you're getting from the provincial government, just raise the mill rate — just raise the mill rate.

So the property tax rebate that I'm getting on my farm, or every other farmer is getting, is lost because of the statements from that member alone. Lost because of those statements alone.

So the school boards at home just got the licence to do exactly that from the Minister of Education; jack up the rate because the minister says it's okay. The minister says it's okay so that's exactly what'll happen all across this province.

In agriculture, the one failing grade that you got in this budget, the real failing grade that you got in this budget was, where is the long-term safety net, Mr. Member from Saskatoon Northwest? You were going to have money, you were going to . . . If you really had any input into this government, why wasn't there money in the hands of farmers within three weeks like you promised there was going to be in your election campaign?

Was it just more of that . . . was it just more of what you talked about after the campaign? Political rhetoric? That's what it's all about with you isn't it? That's what it's all about with this member.

How do you get elected? Say anything, do anything, and when you get there do exactly the opposite. Tell people you can expect property tax cuts and then say to them raise the mill rate. Tell them you're going to have a safety net in place, you're going to have money in the hands of farmers all across this province in three weeks, and we haven't seen it yet. Tell the people of this province that you're going to do more for education, you're going to come forward with a scholarship program, and then deliver not a thing. Not a thing.

Well, Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier and Mr. Speaker, the people of this province will never forget some of the statements that that member has made in this legislature and outside of this legislature. Things like he was going to . . . he was not going to allow the Plains hospital to close. He in fact . . . What happened to it? It closed in a dramatic fashion. In fact he was going to chain himself to the front doors of the building. In fact many people in Saskatchewan wish he still was chained to the front doors.

And I'm sure the Premier, and I'm sure the Premier of this province, I'm sure the Premier of this province wishes he wasn't chained to him right now. Because that's where he is. And all of the members of that government on the opposite side of the House know that they've got a real problem because that's where he is. That's where he is — chained to the NDP, chained to the NDP.

(1515)

Bring forward patronage appointment after patronage appointment. Neil Collins, defeated candidate in Estevan, got royally thumped, royally thumped in the election down in Estevan and now he's got . . . somehow or another he's got the credibility and the credentials to be on the SaskPower board. All because the member from Saskatoon Northwest says he does.

And on top of that, and on top of that we're hung again the two-tier Harvey, the same member that used to sit right back in this seat right over here. The NDP used to criticize him every single day in the House and you'll remember that, Mr. Speaker. Every single day in the House they used to stand up and call him two-tier Harvey and criticize everything he had to say. And they were legitimate in their criticism in a lot of ways.

Harvey McLane will talk about her in a moment. Yes, he'll talk about her in a moment. I'll read you the letters. I'll read you the letters. I'll be happy to read you the letters that we're sending to the association.

Two-tier Harvey over here, two-tier Harvey over here, saying to the people of Saskatchewan, if you have the money to pay extra for health care services, maybe you should. And that's why they coined the phrase, two-tier Harvey, and that's why there's a new member sitting back there . . . back there because two-tier Harvey said that. And somehow or another he has the credibility, somehow or another two-tier Harvey has the credibility to be in this House.

And the member from North Battleford back there wants to criticize Terri Harris. Yes, wants to criticize Terri Harris. And I want to take the time . . . I want to take the time to read you a letter that I've written to the elk breeders association about that criticism, to the elk breeders association.

As the official opposition critic I want to express my regret for not being able to attend your meetings on the weekend in Saskatoon. Our family suffered a loss of an uncle and the funeral was on that day.

Your industry, the elk breeders association, is providing excellent vision of diversification for our province. Your efforts have resulted in significant investment jobs and opportunity for Saskatchewan.

It is always a pleasure to watch a new industry grow from its early beginnings to where the elk industry is today. I understand a large part of the growth of your industry has been a result of the efforts of the former executive director, Terri Harris.

Your association should be commended for awarding Terri with an award of merit for her service to your association. The official opposition is very proud now to have Terri now working in our office. And it is no surprise to your association that Terri is doing a terrific job and is a pleasure to work with.

It is with great surprise and very regrettable that the Premier of Saskatchewan chose to berate Terri for working in our office. This is an unacceptable attack on an individual that has served your industry well.

I fully intend to ask the Premier for an apology to Terri and to your association for your regrettable comments. Again, congratulations for your contributions to the economy of Saskatchewan.

And the next letter goes to the Premier of this province, and I want to read it so the Premier will know what we're going to be asking him for:

On behalf of the official opposition, it was with great shock and disappointment that you chose to sully the reputation of one of the staff of the official opposition, Terri Harris.

The elk breeders association, the elk breeders association, sir, have recognized Terri with an Award of Merit for her efforts, for her efforts on behalf of that industry. For you to cheapen, for you to cheapen her efforts, as you did in question period on April 4th, is an unacceptable attack on an industry-recognized award winner.

I expect you will apologize and want to do the honourable thing.

I've written to the elk breeders association to inform them of your actions. I sincerely hope that you will take the opportunity to apologize to them as well.

And just as can be expected . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And just as can be expected from the Premier of this province, the NDP Premier of this province, he shouts from his seat: not a chance. Never, never will it happen. Never will he do anything like that. Never will he apologize for sullyng the reputation of an industry-recognized award winner in this province. Never, never in this province will the Premier ever, ever do those kind of things because somehow or another, it's beneath the Premier to apologize for his actions when he knows fully he's wrong, when knows fully he's wrong . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, please. Order.

Order, please. I would ask all hon. members to please keep the level of side conversations and comments back and forth at a lower level so we can hear the hon. member from Kindersley.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the budget, the people of Saskatchewan were expecting a lot more. They were expecting, they were expecting a tax decrease, and they get tax increases from the NDP.

They get things like increased fees for fishing and coyote taxes from the NDP. They get PST expansion. They get everything but what they wanted. They get \$400 on the backs of every senior in this province.

Every month that goes by the seniors of this province are going to have less money to spend as a result of this budget; as a result of the minister not telling anybody about it in their budget — not breathing a word of it.

And the Finance minister — if you can imagine this; if you can imagine this, Mr. Speaker — the Finance minister saying, it's not his job in a budget to talk about tax increases; it's the responsibility of the official opposition to bring them out. That's what he said in his response to the media inquiries of yesterday.

Well you can be assured, Mr. Speaker, that every day that this legislature sits all through the summer, every day that it sits, we're going to be asking minister after minister after minister: which increases do you have in your department? How many more fees are there going to be levied? How many more charges are there going to be levied? How many more taxes are the people of Saskatchewan going to pay? And how soon are we going to, from this NDP administration, see the tax decreases that they promised in the budget?

During the election campaign you promised tax decreases and then you do anything but that. And every day that we walk out of this legislature, people all across Saskatchewan say to us, every single day they say to us, and they promised and they promised tax decreases and all we get is tax increases.

And the vague promise from the NDP that they're going to do better, that they're going to have a historic budget, that they're going to cut taxes, and we wind up with anything but. Anything but.

And on top of that, on top of that, Mr. Speaker, all across Saskatchewan right now the people of rural Saskatchewan are faced with a minister from Yorkton going out to the people of Saskatchewan in the form of Joe Garcea and his committee and saying to them, on top of that, we're going to take away your local governments as well.

That's what he said to them. And poor old Joe Garcea, the scapegoat for this outfit, the NDP opposite, is the poor guy that has to go around and try and sell the message.

And at every single one of the meetings, the people unanimously stand and say no, we don't want this, we don't need this, we don't want NDP-style of government in rural Saskatchewan, we don't want that kind of thing happening to the people of this province.

They are saying to them, where is the minister? That's the other thing that they are saying at those meetings: where is the minister? Where is the minister? Is that minister actually going to attend even one of those amalgamation meetings?

I doubt it, Mr. Speaker. Not a single one. Hasn't got the courage to go out there. Instead he sends poor old Joe out there to take the heat for him — poor old Joe is going to take the heat from him.

And that's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member from her chair shouts about the past as she always has. Whenever it's . . . whenever things are a little tight around here, whenever there's a problem, whenever there's a problem in this legislature, what do the members opposite do? Whenever the heat's on you, whenever the heat's on you, what do you do?

They want to talk about 1982. They want to talk about personal

attacks. They want to go on the offensive. They want to talk about anything but what the NDP are doing in Saskatchewan — anything but. Pull out newspaper clippings from 1982. Pull out newspaper clippings from the 80s and say, oh, here's our answer to all the problems, here's the concerns that all of Saskatchewan has.

The member, the Finance minister, you'll recall, you'll recall in his budget address said, no longer are we going to look at the past — we're going to look to the future. And then he stands in his place day after day after day in this legislature with newspaper clippings from the 1980s and said somehow or another this justifies all of their actions today.

And the people of Saskatchewan, you know, are tired of that. And the reason why, and the reason why they're tired of it is because that's your answer to everything — hark back to the past, no vision for the future, even though Jim . . . even though the member from Saskatoon Northwest claims he has vision for the future. Even though he claims he has vision for the future, his answers all speak to the past.

And that's why, and that's why in the election that passed, just passed, that's why the NDP took the licking they did in many places all across Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — There isn't a vision, there isn't a vision, there's no optimism, there's no hope, there's no opportunity in Saskatchewan under your administration. And that's why the people of Saskatchewan are rejecting you at every opportunity. And that's why, and that's why people more and ever are turning to the Saskatchewan Party as an alternative.

That's why they are saying to us, we need hope, we need opportunity, we need jobs, we need vision, we need optimism in our province. We don't need NDP rhetoric, we don't need NDP promises, we don't need NDP taxes, we don't need NDP charges, we don't need NDP fees, we don't need any of that stuff in Saskatchewan. What we need is a new administration in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And I'm just reminded, by seeing the member from Regina Dewdney back there, about his advice to the young people in this province the other day. The other . . . His advice to the people, the young people of Saskatchewan — and particularly to the parents of Saskatchewan when they're giving their young person, their young family member, their child any kind of advice — his advice was don't look for opportunity.

Don't tell them about opportunity. Don't tell them about the possibility of greener pastures elsewhere. Don't tell them about optimism. Don't tell them about any of those things. Shut off the television. Shut off their computer. Don't let them read the newspapers. Don't let them have any opportunity to hear about anything else that's going on in the world. Build a wall around Saskatchewan, do everything you can to convince them to stay here, even though there isn't a job, even though there isn't hope, even though there isn't opportunity, even though there isn't optimism — do that to your young people. And why, Mr.

Member, would you give that kind of advice to your child?

When I was growing up, when I was growing up, and all of the members on this side of the House, the talk around the kitchen table was about rewarding success, rewarding opportunity, talking about risk, talking about chance, talking about success, talking about optimism, talking about opportunity, talking about expanding your horizons, talking about all of those kinds of things — that's what we were taught.

We weren't taught as a family, fortunately, we weren't taught to just look, and build a wall around the province of Saskatchewan. Whether you like it or not, Mr. Member, the people of Saskatchewan have opportunity to look elsewhere. And that's what they are doing and that's they are doing in overwhelming numbers. That's what they are doing in overwhelming numbers.

They are saying to the people and they are saying to this administration, I'm going to vote with my feet, I'm going to leave this province. That's what they are saying.

And the newspapers — and the member from North Battleford would know this — the newspapers are full of those kinds of comments. We see a geologist firm from Regina here saying in the newspaper a couple of days ago that they are pulling the pin as of July 1. They're leaving Saskatchewan.

And I look in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I look in my constituency. I look in my constituency alone — I'll give you a few examples. I look at drilling companies like Pirate Drilling in Kindersley, \$15 million payroll — \$15 million payroll — and as of July 1, they'll be operating out of Calgary.

I look at another oil company in my constituency — and the Minister of Energy and Mines would know this — Fraser Oil in Kindersley, Saskatchewan, not quite as big, their payroll's only about \$5 million. I know the NDP don't mind flushing that down either. So only about \$5 million, significant investment, significant number of jobs in Kindersley, and they're moving to Calgary, Alberta. Another business down the drain.

(1530)

And one that is probably the most disturbing of all, Mr. Speaker. The other day I had two dentists in Kindersley tell me that they brought in a new, young dentist. He was born and raised in the Kindersley area, up around Major. Kelly Chotowetz is his name. He went through the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) dental program and he came out of that program with honours, came out of that program with honours. And they thought, we have finally found the right young guy to come back and take over this practice — finally found him.

And the dentist in Kindersley said to me, you know we brought him back in at a considerable expense. And you know anyone that has any knowledge of the dental industry, it takes a considerable amount of money to help bring in a new, young practising dentist into their fold — and they did that. And they told me it probably cost them, probably cost them \$200,000 to bring him into their dental practice — probably cost them around \$200,000.

And he was with them for one year and then he announced to them just a few days ago that after this budget, that after all of these kinds of things that are happening in Saskatchewan, that he said, I'm sorry, I'm not staying here; picking up, and I'm leaving, with his wife. And they're moving to Calgary, Alberta.

And that's the most disturbing thing that I think I've heard in the longest time, that a young fellow that had so much promise in Saskatchewan, so much hope, so much opportunity, so much optimism here for Saskatchewan, looked at it and realized and it took him only one year to do it once he got out into private practice, only took him one year to realize that the opportunity was not here for him. And he picked up and left.

And along with him will leave a future family. Will leave with him, I dare say, future kindergarten students; along with him, volunteerism in Saskatchewan. Along with him will go hope; along with him will go opportunity; along with him will go the optimism that Saskatchewan should have in this province, but it doesn't.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the disturbing reasons why I will be voting against this budget, because it doesn't speak to those kinds of people. It doesn't provide them with any hope and it doesn't provide them with any opportunity. And people all across Saskatchewan are saying those kinds of things as they wave goodbye to their kids.

Mr. Speaker, every one of the members of this legislature, every single one of us, should be aware of that kind of situation; every single one of us should be trying our level best to turn that around.

And instead what did we see from this administration? They bring forward a budget that promises everything and delivers nothing. Total deception. People across this province are looking at this budget and every single one of them are saying to themselves, I didn't realize that it was going to have this impact.

On budget day I think a lot of them looked at it and they said to the Finance minister, congratulations for finally doing something in terms of taxes. But the problem is, Mr. Minister, they didn't realize all of the hidden agenda that you have along with your budget. They didn't realise that even their fishing licence is going to go up. They didn't realise that if you want to go out and protect your cattle operation you're going to have to buy a licence now to handle the coyote situation.

They didn't realize, the seniors in this province didn't realize that they were going to be taxed to the tune of about \$400 for long-term nursing care in this province. They didn't understand or didn't realize it. And the Finance minister unfortunately didn't want to tell them about that in his budget.

He had all the spin doctors in place to tell everybody about how good a budget it was. Had everything lined up — talk show after talk show, presentation after presentation, dinner after dinner, NDP fundraiser after NDP fundraiser — to go across this province one after another of them, cabinet minister after cabinet minister after cabinet minister, backbencher after backbencher, to spread the good news about how this budget was going to be such a great thing for the people of

Saskatchewan.

And all across Saskatchewan it's receiving that big, fat failing grade because they didn't want to tell them about those kinds of things.

You might have actually been able to do it. You might have actually been able to convince the people of this province that it was good for them if you had told them about the bad parts in the budget. You might have been able to convince them.

But you know what has happened in Saskatchewan? People have lost absolute confidence and trust in your administration because those are the kinds of things they've learned to expect from you. Those are the kinds of things they've grown, they've grown to understand that you can expect from the NDP in each and every time that they bring forward those kinds of budgets.

And the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Finance, he should be ashamed that he didn't tell the people of Saskatchewan about all of those kinds of things. And for him to stand before the media of this province to say to them that a budget isn't the proper place to talk about tax increases . . . it's the proper place to talk about good things; it isn't the proper place to talk about tax increase; that's the responsibility of the official opposition.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we accept that challenge. We accept that challenge.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And we will be doing exactly that. We will be doing exactly that. We will be going as well to the talk shows. We'll be going as well to the dinners across Saskatchewan. We'll be going as well to the fundraising events and to the community events all across Saskatchewan. And we'll be telling them exactly about what is in it.

We'll be telling them about the five pages of fee increases alone in the Department of Environment. We'll be telling you about that. We will be asking minister after minister. Every single one of you will be asked those same questions. What kind of fee increases are in your department? What kind of tax increases? What kind of cutbacks are in your department? What kind of expected increases in terms of taxation can the people of this province expect?

And if you have the courage, if you have the courage of your convictions, I'm sure you will want to tell the people about what you are doing, not only for them, but to them. And that's what the people have learned about Saskatchewan and the NDP — what are you going to . . . not only what are you going to do for them, but what have you done to them in the last little while. And that's the problem with it.

And I couldn't help but listen with absolute horror as the member from Saskatoon Northwest mockingly talked about catfish and . . . (inaudible) . . . fee increases, and coyote taxes and ball bearings and drill bits and those kinds of things.

He clearly has no understanding, Mr. Speaker, of how important some of those things are to the people of this province. How important the oil industry is, how important the

\$350 million . . . (inaudible) . . . pumped into the economy, or into the coffers of the Government of Saskatchewan last year alone. And in terms of the investment in this economy, I'll tell you, when it comes to industry activity in Saskatchewan, drill bits and ball bearings are pretty darned important.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And in my constituency, fully 30 per cent of the people in Kindersley alone are employed in that industry. And I can't help but think they'll be listening with great shock when they discover that the Minister of Education for the province of Saskatchewan, the supposed guy that wants to talk about the future, the guy with all the vision for Saskatchewan, all of the vision — he takes credit for all of the vision of this province right today — is saying, it doesn't matter about drill bits and ball bearings because who cares anyway? Well, I care.

And the members of the official opposition care and I care about the jobs and I care about the Pirate Drilling and those companies in my constituency that we just finished losing. And I care about the loss of Fraser Oil from my constituency; and I care about Kelly Chotowitz, the young dentist that I lost in my constituency; and I care about all of the other people all across Saskatchewan that are voting with their feet and renting a U-Haul and pulling out of this province.

You have to wonder about what are the reasons why. What are the fundamental differences between what are happening in other places and what are happening in Saskatchewan? All of the problems that are associated in Alberta . . . or any problems that they have are associated with growth. How do you deliver more services? How do you build faster? How do you build new suburbs in Calgary at the rate of requirements of 20,000 people a month? How do you do that in Calgary? How do you build in Medicine Hat to keep up with the demand? Those are the kinds of problems that they are faced with.

And what are we faced with? How do we carve up this province into 10 or 12 little regions that Stabler is talking about at the tune of \$250,000 of taxes? How do we carve it up into these little chieftains so that the NDP can grasp a little bit more power — a little bit more power from the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — That's what this is all about. It's always about power politics in Saskatchewan. It's always about those kinds of things. How do we grasp a little bit more power from the people that we don't trust with anything? How do we do that?

Well you do it by putting in things like a Stabler commission at \$250,000 and telling them what their mandate is and telling them what kind of a report you're going to write. You do it by bringing forward things like the Garcea commission and telling them what their mandate is at the tune of \$750,000 — \$1 million blown, alone, for those kinds of things to tell the people of rural Saskatchewan what they believe in the NDP is good for them.

Well I'll tell you, the people of rural Saskatchewan have had enough. They're looking at this and they're saying to

themselves this is the line in the sand; you're not going to cross this line in the sand because we are not going to allow it to happen. They are saying to the people all across Saskatchewan that's why there's 500 people turn up at meetings, every single one of them across this province, plus.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — There were 500 people plus, Mr. Speaker, at the amalgamation meeting in Kindersley. And in my presentation, as modest as it was, in my presentation I said to the commission, at the end of this presentation . . . and I asked the chairman of the meeting: at the end of the presentations this evening, I would like there to be a vote to see whether people support what the government is doing in this area.

And of course as the evening wore on, I think a lot of people kind of . . . at least I think the panel members at least hoped they had forgotten about that. And then right at the end of the meeting another one of the questioners got up and said, we're just about done the meeting here tonight. I want to know two things — did you do any economic analysis of this program, and are we going to have the vote tonight?

And, Mr. Speaker, you know what happened? Mr. Garcea said no, there's nothing in terms of an economic analysis, and then the Chair called the meeting to an end. And then you'll never believe this, you won't believe this, Mr. Speaker, but there were 500 people there that heard this. The Chair called the meeting to an end and then there were people yelling from all over the floor saying call the vote, call the vote.

And finally the Chair got up and said, you know, I thought I was going to be able to slip that one through. Can you imagine? The Chair of the meeting, the Chair of the meeting said, I hoped I could slip that one through. He hoped that the people at that meeting that night wouldn't remember that there was going to be a vote.

So anyway, he was forced to call it and he finally did. And to his credit he called it. He asked the people in this meeting here this evening, support the report calling for forced amalgamation. And there wasn't a single hand went up. None. Not a single one. Not even the task force members put up their hand to that.

And then he said, I would want everyone that's opposed to the forced amalgamation to now raise their hands. And 500 people plus put up their hands and cheered and roared, and the people of Saskatchewan . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And the people in that constituency knew clearly that the NDP was on the wrong track. And I understand that's happened at meeting after meeting after meeting all across this province.

And at every single one of those meetings and the ones that follow from now on, we're going to be asking the commission members, how do you expect to have any credibility in this exercise when the member from Yorkton has already said to the people of Saskatchewan, not only are we going to direct what

this . . . how this process is going to happen, we're going to . . . the committee's recommendations and the committee's report will reflect our wishes. That's what he said.

So for the \$750,000 the taxpayers of this province just spent, we get the member from Yorkton's final decree — it'll be only our way or the highway. That's it, no other way — it's our way or the highway; just as it always is in Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, my time is drawing to a close here, but I want to end by saying, I want to end by saying that the reasons why, the reasons why the members on this side of the House will not be supporting your budget are many. The reasons why we will not be supporting your budget are many. Because it doesn't speak to our families; it doesn't speak to our friends. It doesn't speak to hope; it doesn't speak to opportunity. It doesn't speak to optimism; it doesn't speak to any of those kinds of things that the people of Saskatchewan wanted in the budget.

They wanted meaningful tax relief and they got none of it. They wanted all of those kinds of things. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget and will be supporting the amendment brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the hon. member from Rosetown-Biggan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, lest there be any expectations of my trying to match the performance of the previous speaker, I want to try to suppress those.

I went through this before just a week ago at a banquet here in the city. The member for Saskatoon Northwest was the first up to set the stage. The member for Kindersley followed and brought the crowd to their feet; they were cheering and they were so excited. And then it fell on me to put them back to sleep so that they could have a good night, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might be provided with a bit of leeway. I didn't have an opportunity during the course of the Throne Speech to make any remarks. And I wanted at the outset, Mr. Speaker, to recognize your elevation to the Chair.

I think that of all the Speakers I've seen, you've come uniquely experienced from a background in law enforcement, dispute resolution. I think those experiences and your qualities will stand us in good stead. And we look forward to working with you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the constituents of Regina Victoria for their support for electing me for a term to represent them here in this Assembly. I very much appreciate the support that they give me.

I also appreciated the campaign. I enjoyed meeting with them, renewing old acquaintances, making new acquaintances. It's a very enervating experience. And I guess it's like that for all members, otherwise we wouldn't be here. We must enjoy that.

And I certainly did.

I also would like to thank my family for their support. Being an MLA, as all the members know and even for the new ones will begin to appreciate, can place a great many demands on a person. Not just demands in terms of being gone away from the families to attend meetings or banquets or whatever the case might be, but also demands in terms of trying to carry on with a normal life in the community — whether it's about grocery shopping or whatever it might be, and to have people intrude into your space to tell you about something or another.

And although as an MLA I don't mind that, it's sometimes difficult for families to fully appreciate that. And so I thank my family for their support and for allowing me to do this, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my constituency assistant who has been with me for many years. She continues to do a tremendous amount of hard work and does it with a great sensitivity and terrific confidence. And without that, I'm not sure I'd be here this time, Mr. Speaker. So I want to thank her too for the wonderful work that she does.

Mr. Speaker, just for the information of members, especially the new members, the constituency I represent is Regina Victoria, which is a part of east central Regina. A series of, in my mind, very pleasant neighbourhoods, a very nice area to live.

The neighbourhoods are in a way not dissimilar to the distinct communities that members represent in their own ridings and rural ridings. We may not have distinct boundaries all the time between the communities and they may run from one into the other, but they are distinct communities. And as neighbourhoods, they're not much different than many of the small towns that members are more familiar with.

I go walking. I'm around in my area and people stop to talk and greet each other. They're friendly people. And in that way it's not much different than many small towns that I've lived in.

Sometimes members come here and have this notion of this large, impersonal city filled with all these cold people, and that's not the case, Mr. Speaker. Most of these cities are a series of very liveable and very warm neighbourhoods., Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just might point out for the interest of members that Regina Victoria is arguably the provincial constituency in all of Canada that has seen the highest economic growth and the most employment creation in all of Canada as a provincial constituency.

Now I could be corrected; there may be the odd constituency in Calgary or perhaps in Toronto that might also be able to lay claim to that, but I'm not going to be easily moved off of making that claim that Regina Victoria, as a provincial constituency, as one provincial constituency among many provincial constituencies in Canada, has during the course of the last number of years seen probably the most rapid economic growth, the most rapid increase in jobs anywhere in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And that's because Regina Victoria contains the east Regina Victoria . . . or contains the Victoria East shopping centre area including the Victoria Square Mall and many of the big-box retailers, and members will know that there's been a tremendous economic development in that area. Now that's all in my constituency, and it's not something that I take any credit for whatsoever. Okay. It's not something that I take any credit for whatsoever.

If there's credit, then the credit should be due to the people of the city of Regina or the people of the province, but it should not go to me as an individual. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, when other areas of the city have severe economic problems or have social problems, we should not give credit to the MLA as somehow being responsible for that.

That's not how our cities work. That's not how they work. We share all of the advances that we make, and we share all of the problems that we have, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about the Department of Social Services. This is not a department or an area of government that has been talked about very much by members opposite. I can't recall anyone saying anything about the Department of Social Services. Some of my colleagues have mentioned it.

I guess when you're not talked about in government, that's good news. And I accept that, but there are some comments I want to make.

I look forward to discussing the department's estimates and the details of what it is the department does during estimates when they come up. But I did want to touch on a few items, Mr. Speaker.

First, a few words about the employees of the Department of Social Services. I take great pride in the work of the employees in my department. The work that they do is often challenging; frequently stressful. Sometimes when you make a positive difference in someone's life, then the job can be very rewarding. But more often than not, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. Social workers do thankless work in what is often very difficult situations.

They deal with extremely complex and emotionally charged issues. Their work is often a very precarious balancing act. There are certainly other professions that will lay claim in our society to being the most demanding, the most difficult . . . and I can think of professional groups who have been here before the legislature and in public life, to make that claim. I haven't seen social workers do that, but I in my opinion would state that I think that some of . . . social work is arguably the most difficult work in our society, Mr. Speaker.

Having been a social worker for a period of my life, and having been an elected representative for a longer period of my life, I'm in a position to make some contrasts. And I'd like to point to people that I'm now in the decision-making business, and have been doing that for many years.

And in the course of making decisions in government, or whether it was in city council, you can become involved in

making extremely difficult decisions, trying to weigh the advantages of one thing as opposed to the disadvantages of something else; trying to weigh the overall good of society versus the difficulties that may be placed on individuals or groups in our society. And trying to weigh that out, Mr. Speaker, so that as a decision maker you can make some very difficult decisions in the work that we do.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that any of the decisions that I've been faced with in public life begin to compare with the difficulty and the complexity of the decisions that I had to make as a social worker, Mr. Speaker. And I say that from some experience, and I say that honestly, Mr. Speaker, that social workers do very demanding work. I salute our social workers; I salute all of our staff, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I also just wanted to make mention of a very unique social worker in the province of Saskatchewan, not an employee of the Department of Social Services, but a social worker who has been in practice in the province for many years. I speak of Dr. Geoff Pawson who is the executive director of the Ranch Ehrlo Society. And very recently Dr. Pawson was recognized and received the Order of Canada. This is a unique distinction that is accorded to Canadian citizens who have made great contributions to our society.

I am very pleased to see, Mr. Speaker, that social workers too can be recognized for the very difficult work that they do in our society. So I congratulate Dr. Pawson, and I congratulate all social workers for the difficult work that they do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to touch on the issue of poverty in our society. One of the most unfortunate aspects of the 1980s in Saskatchewan, and there were many, was what I saw as a deinvestment in the needs of the poor. And I think that's putting it diplomatically. Others might say that the government of the day was downright antagonistic when it came to poor people in Saskatchewan.

What we saw in the 1980s was a very rapid transition from . . . for many people from full-time, well-paid jobs to part-time, poorly paid jobs. I think we can all remember the tremendous shifts that took place in our economy as that happened. Hopefully, thankfully, that has peaked, Mr. Speaker. I think the evidence points that increasingly the jobs that are being created in Saskatchewan — I dare say in other parts of the country as well — are increasingly full-time jobs as opposed to being part-time jobs. So hopefully that phenomenon has peaked. But that is something that took place during the 1980s and is only ending now, Mr. Speaker.

Another unfortunate thing that happened during the 1980s is that the government of the day starved the daycare system, and daycare is a, is a service to many working families in our society that subsidizes them so that they can ensure that there is top quality child care for their children, even while they go to work to try to make ends meet. By de-investing in child care it tended to create greater problems for families, made it harder

for them to work, Mr. Speaker.

The government of the day, I think relative to the inflation that was taking place, also suppressed the minimum wage and that too is a major impact on poverty. When you begin to look at the difference between the minimum wage in a jurisdiction and the kind of wage that someone needs to make in a jurisdiction in order to get out of poverty, the greater the gap, the greater the chances that one will begin to see the development of poverty. So suppressing the minimum wage as they did relative to inflation has also had a major impact on the poorest people in our society.

The government of the day also did whatever they could to discourage workers from organizing to advance their own economic interests. There were changes to labour legislation that were downright antagonistic to the needs of working people. And members can look at that as sort of some ideological thing that they believe in. But at the end of the day, denying people those rights and denying them that opportunity to organize to protect their own interest, has an impact on people and has an economic impact on people's pocketbooks, Mr. Speaker.

And of course the other regrettable thing that happened in the 1980s was the very punitive taxation measures like the flat tax that was introduced by the then Devine government. I think the Minister of Finance that first introduced it was Bob Andrew, then from the constituency of Kindersley.

I remember the press coverage of the day that the right-wing columnists from across Canada were hailing Bob Andrew as some economic guru for having introduced a flat tax in Saskatchewan. And they thought he was just a wonderful person. In fact, I think it was Dian Cohen who said, we look forward to the next brain thrust or the next great idea from Bob Andrew.

This was in a sense laughable, Mr. Speaker, that the right wing who supposedly has all these concerns about economics and has all these concerns about trying to keep things on balance, people like Dian Cohen would say these things about Bob Andrew, the Finance minister, who really introduced deficit financing to Saskatchewan. And was the person who, I think, in concert with Grant Devine, the two of them, who really set us on a road for which we are still paying — and paying mightily — today.

But it was ironic to read the coverage of the flat tax that he was being hailed . . . and the reason I say this in the contribution of poverty, Mr. Speaker, is that the flat tax is a very punitive tax. It's a very regressive tax for people with low income. Even though, even though, the well-to-do could find ways to get around the flat tax, poor working families couldn't find any way and they're paying more in terms of income taxes.

So what we saw, Mr. Speaker, was a growing number of poor during the course of 1980s. And when the government was finally voted out after the '80s, not only did we have a growing number of poor, we also had a huge deficit and debt situation in Saskatchewan that we had to deal with. But once we balanced our budget, Mr. Speaker, we identified poverty reduction in Saskatchewan as a priority for the government.

In 1998 we introduced our building independence strategy. This strategy was intended to reduce dependence on welfare. And there are a number of elements in that plan. It included a training allowance that was more generous than welfare benefits so as to encourage people to upgrade their skills.

It's working, Mr. Speaker. We've seen, I think, approximately 5,000 people in Saskatchewan being assisted by the provincial training allowance. And people are still being helped to upgrade their skills and to put them in a better position to not only go forward in education but also to get meaningful employment in the economy, Mr. Speaker.

The other benefit that we introduced, Mr. Speaker, was a Saskatchewan Child Benefit which, in conjunction with the National Child Benefit, provided substantial support to low income families. The maximum benefit that a family might receive in Saskatchewan is approximately \$2,500 per child. That's a substantial help.

I also want to recognize the contribution of the Premier of Saskatchewan in making it possible that we could have these child benefits and have this tangible support for people in Saskatchewan.

I know that it's not fashionable for us in society to talk about the poor, to talk about the low income, or to see premiers to go to bat for the poor, but the fact of the matter is the Premier of Saskatchewan went to bat for poor people in Saskatchewan and poor people in all of Canada. And as a result, we've seen the first major social program in Canada since medicare. And I give a lot of credit to the member from Riversdale, the Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, one of the other benefits that we saw in the . . . that we've seen in the last three years is the Saskatchewan employment supplement. This is a subsidy to assist working families with the work-related costs of . . . or like transportation and child care. And here the maximum benefit can be up to about \$2,000 per child.

So those two benefits combined are about \$4,500. That's substantial help for some low-income families. Help that means that they're in a better position to go to work and have the wherewithal to get the transportation, go to work, to have the clothing that they might need for work, and importantly, to make sure that they've got some support for child care that they need in order to be able to go to work.

These two benefits, Mr. Speaker, plus the family health benefits plan, which is a plan that provides coverage for low-income people. We have coverage in Saskatchewan for people on welfare so that if families on welfare experience some . . . have some problems with respect to children's health or there's some catastrophic illness, then we're in a position to assist them.

And we felt that we should also be extending those kinds of benefits to low-income working families so that some health problem on the part of their children, or some catastrophic illness in the family didn't set them back and put them back on the welfare. And those benefits plus the Saskatchewan . . . or

the family health benefits, Mr. Speaker, are having a profound impact on low-income families in Saskatchewan.

The members will recall that a few months ago a group called campaign 2000, which is a . . . I think is, comes in part because of the efforts of the Canadian Council on Social Development, but in any event, is a group that tries to monitor child poverty in Canada.

After the Parliament of Canada passed a motion saying that they wanted to eradicate child poverty, campaign 2000 issued a report, like they do every year, on child poverty in Canada. And we saw that in their last report card, that Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is the only province in Canada to reduce child poverty since 1989, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the government's actions in tackling poverty in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I would be the first to say that more needs to be done. But I take great pride in also saying that in this particular instance, we're also on the right track, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about welfare. There is reason to believe that many people in Saskatchewan will be confused about welfare and how many people there are on welfare and how many welfare cases there are in Saskatchewan.

I say they have reason to be confused because during the last number of months and during the last election campaign we saw the Leader of the Opposition, we saw the Leader of the Opposition going around in advertisements, in speeches and so on, putting out a great deal of misinformation about what is taking place in Saskatchewan with respect to welfare.

And what he essentially said was that there's been a huge increase in the number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan on account of the NDP government. Well that's what he said. He said that there was a huge increase in the number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan on account of the NDP government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, if you really begin to examine the causes of some of the increases that have taken place in welfare, I'd suggest that the member for Rosetown should look in the mirror because the policies that he puts forward probably has a greater impact than what the Saskatchewan government has had.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, in 1991 there were about 28,000 cases of welfare in the province of Saskatchewan. By 1994 those cases had jumped to a high of 41,284. So there was a very rapid, very great increase in welfare from about 1990-1991 to 1994. And there's no denying that. That is the truth. Those are the facts.

The question is what did that have to do with the NDP government or, for that matter, with any provincial government? And I would suggest that it's very little, Mr. Speaker. In fact this rapid increase started to take place before the NDP was ever elected in 1991. This rapid increase started to take place even during the Devine administration.

And there are three reasons for that. One, there was a recession

in 1990-91. You will all recall the recessionary times that I think helped convince people that Mr. Devine and his administration should be booted out of office. You will remember the recessionary times here as contributing to the mass exodus of people from Saskatchewan to Alberta and other parts of Canada, where employment prospects were much better than they are . . . than they were here in Saskatchewan.

I know members like to talk about depopulation and people moving to Alberta and that somehow that this is some epidemic that's taking place in our society. But I tell the members that if you really want to get a sense of an epidemic and people leaving Saskatchewan in droves, you only have to look back about 10 years to get a full appreciation of what was happening.

And that was people were leaving Saskatchewan not by the hundreds, Mr. Speaker, not by the hundreds, not by the thousands, Mr. Speaker, but leaving Saskatchewan by the tens of thousands because there is was no hope, no opportunity, nothing for them here in Saskatchewan. And at least in that score, Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the progress that we have been making.

Is it enough? No it's not enough, and I think all the members on this side would recognize and agree that there's much more that needs to be done. But again you know everything in life is relative, and if the members want to talk about out-migrations and the policies of governments and the impact that it has, I invite them to compare our record. I invite you to compare our record with the previous government.

Before you go to the people of Saskatchewan and say well we're going to do it so much better or there's so much more that we can be . . . Oh sorry, that was an old phrase from some years ago by Mr. Devine. But before you go around saying that oh, we can do it so much better than anyone else, I would just encourage members to take a breath, and I would encourage the people of Saskatchewan to put things in some context.

But in any event, there was a rapid increase in welfare which started under the Devine administration, in part because of the economy at the time but also in part because of changes by the federal government. And that is something that affected all the provinces in Canada.

You will probably remember that starting with the Mulroney government, in 1990 thereabouts, the federal government started to change the rules for Unemployment Insurance — I guess they now call it Employment Insurance — but they changed the rules for Unemployment Insurance. It meant that it is more difficult for people to qualify; the benefits that were being paid out were less than they were before.

In any event, the federal government made those changes which meant that people who hitherto would have been able to qualify for Unemployment Insurance now couldn't qualify and had to go to provincial welfare offices in order to get support between jobs. Now that's not something that affected only Saskatchewan, that's something that affected all provinces in the country and affected Saskatchewan as well.

That resulted in a major part of the increase that we saw starting in 1990 as a result of the changes by the Mulroney government,

changes that were very strongly supported by the right wing, very strongly supported by the Reform Party when they had the chance. In fact they said the government should go harder and faster on those kinds of things. You can do that but it does have an impact on people, and it's had a very great impact on welfare rolls in Saskatchewan.

We also saw in 1993 the federal government make a further change. Oh yes, before I get into that, you'll all know that the Employment Insurance fund, so-called now, has a very healthy surplus. In fact there's been a great deal of debate in Canada as of late as to how the federal government should deal with the question of the surplus that's there in the Employment Insurance fund.

And some people are saying well you should give it back to employers and others are saying you should use it to reduce your taxes and so on. I don't want to get into that debate, but the fact of the matter is that the federal government has a very healthy surplus — thank you very much, thank you very much — as a result of the changes that they made.

Well those changes, plus changes to treatment by the federal government as to off-reserve Indians, meant that there was a huge increase in welfare caseloads. But the good news is that since that peak in 1994 welfare caseloads have been going like this. And they've been going like this — they've been going down, they've been going down as a result of a better economy in Saskatchewan and as a result of some of the changes that we've made to our system. Now the member may smirk but that's the facts of the case. That's the facts of the case.

(1615)

I mean, welfare caseloads have come down. Welfare caseloads went up as a result of the federal government and the changes they made. Welfare caseloads have come down 14 per cent since 1994 as a result of a good economy. And the member may say, well, there's really no association between the economy and welfare caseloads. Well there's a very strong association.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan, as one of the Prairie provinces, has one of the lowest dependency ratios in all of Canada; that is to say the number of people in the population who are dependent on welfare. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba have the lowest dependency ratios. They also have the lowest unemployment rates in all of Canada. I think there's an association there.

So I just wanted to set it straight and hopefully your leader . . . or their leader, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, won't go around as he has done in the past, now knowing all of the facts, won't go around as he has in the past attempting to mislead people in Saskatchewan about the true facts related to welfare in Saskatchewan. And he'll quit trying to score political points on the backs of the poorest people in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, my time's coming to an end. I just wanted to say that this is a good budget for low-income families. Although there has been an expansion to the PST base, we have not included necessities like home heating and children's clothing. Poor people, low-income

people do have access to a sales tax credit which in my opinion will more than compensate them for the costs they will have.

This budget sees the beginning of the end of the Devine flat tax, Mr. Speaker. And that is a very welcome initiative by low-income families in Saskatchewan because it means that, as opposed to having the regressive tax system we have, we now begin to have a progressive tax system.

Poor families will pay their fair share, but with this new tax system they're not going to be paying more than their fair share, Mr. Speaker. We will see 55,000 fewer low-income taxpayers in Saskatchewan. Finally, Mr. Speaker, a progressive tax system in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, this budget has also seen a major investment in social housing. This is welcome news for some of our low-income families because it might increase their options for safe, affordable, decent housing so that their children can be raised in better environments than is now the case, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up. I again want to thank the members for their attention and I look forward to their contributions and debate. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a real privilege to be able to respond to the budget speech. I have only a few minutes and I'm going to try and summarize very quickly some of the things that . . . some of the concerns that I've picked up over the last couple of days listening to the debate and some of the things that I think need to be highlighted in summary form.

I was very anxious to hear the Throne Speech . . . I mean the budget speech because of the promises in the Throne Speech and some of the things that we had heard in the election campaign.

There was a lot of things promised — to listen to the people; they promised some very meaningful tax reductions, a new way of doing government, a real advantage in this coalition. Of course they were talking about the tax reductions and I know that the Liberal promise, for instance, of the civil service reduction and how that was going to square with the budget as it came out.

So when the budget speech came out and I was listening to it, it really appeared that there was some positive innovations there; and I have to commend them for some of those things like removing some of these simpler taxes, the flat tax, for instance; going to a more simple tax form; the reduction and the elimination of some of the other taxes — the provincial flat tax for instance; and the decoupling — very good moves.

But when I talk to my constituents in the Lloydminster area, it was very interesting to get the reaction from them — very much the same reaction that we had here, very much what we had heard earlier on.

Some of the reactions that I heard: if it looks too good to be true, be careful; the devil is in the details, they said. Actually what they said is it's the bogeyman in the books in this case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — What's in the budget that's going to keep me in Saskatchewan right now, they said, let alone into the future. They were very concerned about what was happening. They said they felt a lot of discomfort as the minister was speaking.

And I take those comments very seriously because in the Lloyd region, the Lloydminster region in particular, the constituents there are very aware of the kind of conditions that they make their personal decisions on. Remember that the Lloydminster area is in a very unique situation. Most people live there, they work there, and they do business there in a dual environment.

And where I'm from, you just don't say to the people — as I've heard from the other side — you just don't talk about Alberta. You don't let people know what's going on there. You can't compare Alberta with ourselves. I've heard that over and over again. We don't want to be Albertans. We just want to be Saskatchewan.

Well let me say to you and everyone here: don't be afraid of our neighbours. We should be learning from our neighbours. We don't want to disavow their very presence. And I think by . . . it would be a disservice to everyone here and to the people of Saskatchewan.

What I've heard, I've heard them say Alberta is not our way. There is no difference between the province . . . And again I ask: who are these people trying to convince? Are they trying to convince our young people? Are they trying to convince our trained and educated people who actually have moved away already? Are they trying to convince our nurses?

We have to pay attention to what's happening in that Lloyd area because really that's, that's where the reality really hits the road. It's not an anomaly up in that north corner. Lloydminster, I think, should be viewed as really a model for what might be in store for the rest of the province. I think you have to look at that big picture.

Presently Lloydminster is in a boom cycle, and one of the few places in the province that is in a boom cycle. It's a growing and a young population. It has an expanded economy, and it has a vigour, and it has a momentum. But that does not come from the vision that I saw in the budget. I don't see any policies or initiatives from this government in this budget.

The engine for that vigour is really coming and spilling over from Alberta. And what's happening in Alberta is really there in spite of what's happening here in Saskatchewan.

When we talk about . . . In the budget speech I heard growth and opportunity. Well that's certainly happening in Lloydminster but the growth is not on the Saskatchewan side, and the opportunity is not there either. No matter what this government says, stagnation seems to have happened on the Saskatchewan side and not on the Alberta side.

From the short term, there is a real urgency to the situation. People are relocating. In my area they're relocating daily; decisions are being made to move. And in the short term, this budget only adds to the continuation in this direction. It doesn't help it. In fact it increases the urgency to make these changes.

So why must we keep talking about our competition and why do I bring up Alberta? Well one of the first rules of business, Mr. Speaker, is to know your competition, understand the advantages of our competition, and why. Understand what has been done and make sure that we can copy those and take advantage of those advantages. You must understand the vision that make these changes happen, and understand the mission and the methods that are making it happen.

If we want to compete, we have to take advantage of those things. But remember: it's a moving target, Mr. Speaker. It's a moving target because just at the time as our personal income taxes will eventually equate to Alberta's, you have to remember that their projection is to actually eliminate the personal income tax altogether.

And you must remember that the economic forecast in Alberta coming up in the next three or four years is projecting 295,000 new jobs. Well where do you suppose those jobs will come from? Two hundred and ninety-five thousand jobs, Mr. Speaker, is about three-quarters of our total workforce.

Really what should have been expected in this budget, and I didn't see, was a couple of things that are very important, and that budget statement should have had something about a statement of vision. And I saw no long-term vision; I saw no long-term direction in that budget. I don't see anything in that budget that says where this government plans to be and where it's going, not only in the near future but in the long term as well.

But instead of that, instead of a vision or a clear statement — and that's what people so desperately need in this province — all we got is some tinkering, some self-congratulations. We saw a lot of hidden taxes, a lot of fee increases that we're only finally discovering at this point.

We didn't see the vision, we saw trends. We didn't hear any immediate action, we heard some promises and we heard a lot of trust me. And I'm wondering why the people don't believe what's going on when this governments put forward their budget.

Well you have to remember what actually the people see. You have to remember what they make decisions on. They wanted to see a tax reduction — not a promise into the future — and all they got was a tax expansion right away.

And I think what was particularly arrogant at this stage was this government saying that they could have taxed even more. They could have taxed restaurant foods, they could have taxed children's food, they could have taxed utility rates. But they didn't do so and therefore in some convoluted way they must have felt they're really the good guys here.

What they see as balancing the budget on downloading onto the people — particularly the municipalities. The net taxes paid by

the municipalities on fuel and services, equipment, is actually more than the operating grants paid by this government. It's a complete download.

What this budget really should be described as, Mr. Speaker, is a token budget. And that's really the word that the minister used when he was describing what the student tax credit was in an interview with a student who said \$350 would not keep him in Saskatchewan. This person would go elsewhere for opportunities.

And I think this budget should be more adequately described, at least in my area, as a emigration or an out-migration budget.

If we look in the Health department, we see that same trend, the downloading, putting the cost to the regions. Many of the health regions are now running at a considerable budget . . . deficit rather. And the administration costs are up. And it's only actually a \$16 million expenditure. That's just a token.

We see the same trend in agriculture. We see the same deficiency of vision. We see the deficiency of direction there. And that's exactly what was needed in this budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we listen to the people, we say that they've missed the point in this budget. They've neglected the urgency.

I cannot support this budget speech for those reasons. And I will be supporting the amendment that will create a temporary tax relief that is so lacking in this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

(1630)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I noticed in your gallery that a couple of couples have joined us from the Moosomin area, and I think we're looking forward to joining them for dinner just a little later on.

But John and June Schulte and Harvey and Blanche Steffenson have joined us this afternoon for a few minutes. And I'd like to invite you and the members of this Assembly to extend a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Cline, seconded by the Hon. Mr. Romanow that this Assembly do now resolve itself into the Committee of Finance, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Hermanson.

The Speaker: — Hon. members, in accordance with rule 15(3), I'd now invite the mover of the main motion to close debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in my place to close debate.

And I want to say what this budget is really about, Mr. Speaker, this budget is about a vision for the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's what this budget is about, Mr. Speaker. It's not about the next week. It's not about the next month. It's not about the next three months, Mr. Speaker. It's about the next generation and it's about the future of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the future, we have a future in Saskatchewan — notwithstanding the gloom and doom preached by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues — that is bright and secure because of this budget, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud of this budget, and I'm proud of my colleagues and the people of Saskatchewan that have helped us prepare this budget, Mr. Speaker.

And what is it about? It is about the future. It's about growth and prosperity, Mr. Speaker. And that starts with a fairer tax system. And that's what this budget delivers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We need a simple competitive tax system for growth and opportunity in our new economy, and Saskatchewan people deserve a tax break. And maybe, Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition aren't going to vote for that tax break, but I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that every member that sits on this side of the House will be voting for a tax break for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — They say that you don't have to do anything with your tax system except hack and slash income taxes, Mr. Speaker. That's the extent of their vision. They say that you don't have to reform our entire taxation system. And what they're really saying, Mr. Speaker, is that they want to go back into deficit and debt.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have been, on this side of the House, we've delivered seven consecutive balanced budgets. And as long as we sit on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue delivering balanced budgets in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And we hear day after day members of the opposition getting up in this House and saying there's no tax cuts in this budget, Mr. Speaker. But I'll tell you and I'll tell this House, the people of this province know that on July 1 of this year, less than three months from now, the Saskatchewan flat tax, introduced by those people over there in 1985, is going to be cut in half, Mr. Speaker — cut in half.

And on January 1 of this year, Mr. Speaker, the flat tax is going to be eliminated. It will be gone. The debt reduction surtax will be gone and the high income surtax, Mr. Speaker, will be gone. And we will be going to a simple three-way tax structure, Mr. Speaker, that will lower income taxes for every person in this province who pays income tax, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And not only that, not only that, we are going to remove the 55,000 low-income taxpayers in this province from the provincial income tax rolls, altogether, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And what I want to know, and what the people of Saskatchewan want to know, Mr. Speaker, is why do the members opposite oppose the elimination of the Saskatchewan flat tax, Mr. Speaker? Why? And why do the members opposite oppose taking 55,000 low-income people off of the Saskatchewan income tax rolls, Mr. Speaker? Why do they . . . why are they opposed to that, Mr. Speaker?

Well, I'll tell you why. Because this perplexed me. They've been getting up for years in this province screaming about taxes and the need to lower taxes, Mr. Speaker. Now there's a plan to lower taxes and they don't support it. And I asked myself, why? Why would they not support it?

And then you know what I did, Mr. Speaker, I looked at their election platform. And do you know what they proposed in their election platform, Mr. Speaker? They proposed that we reduce the basic rate of income tax collection from 48 per cent to 38 per cent. And what does that mean, Mr. Speaker?

No they did not propose that we eliminate the flat tax. Did they propose that? No. They did not propose that we eliminate the debt reduction surtax. They didn't propose that, they wanted to keep it on. They did not propose that we eliminate the high-income surtax, Mr. Speaker. They didn't propose that. And they did not propose that we would eliminate and take off the tax rolls 55,000 low-income people. They didn't propose that, Mr. Speaker. And I'll tell you why. Because what they say to the people of Saskatchewan is, cut the income taxes of the millionaire by 20 per cent and cut the income taxes of the senior citizen by 20 per cent. And that's not what we say, Mr. Speaker. We say, take the senior citizen off of the tax roll if they're low-income, Mr. Speaker, not a big tax cut for the rich.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's what we say, Mr. Speaker, and

that's what we're going to do. And I'll tell you something. No mention of the flat tax from them, Mr. Speaker. No mention of the other surtaxes; no mention of higher personal credits that will take low-income people off of the tax rolls; no mention of enhanced credits for senior citizens; no mention of new credits for children; no mention of fairer treatment for families, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll tell you something. The opposition hates this tax package. And I'll tell you why they hate it, Mr. Speaker, because it doesn't contain a big tax cut for their rich friends — that's why.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And that's what they really want. It's not what they're going to tell people but that's what they really want, Mr. Speaker.

Because you know who wrote their tax cut plan for the rich, Mr. Speaker? Their advisors on Bay Street in Toronto, Mr. Speaker. That's where it came from.

Well, I've got news for them, and I've got news for the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. Our tax cuts for ordinary people and low-income people in Saskatchewan wasn't designed by Bay Street in Toronto; it was designed on main street right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And if you think, Mr. Speaker, that they're unhappy now because they didn't get their tax cut for the rich, which is their secret and not-so-secret agenda, Mr. Speaker.

If you think they're unhappy now, you just wait until July 1 of this year when the flat tax that they brought in is cut in half, Mr. Speaker. And then we'll see how unhappy they are.

And if you think that they're going to be unhappy about that, Mr. Speaker, you just wait until January 1 — less than nine months from now — when that flat tax is eliminated, when the high-income surtax is eliminated, when the debt-reduction surtax is eliminated, and we're going to a new, fair, simple, competitive income tax system for this province over your opposition.

And, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And they don't like it because they want their tax cuts for their rich friends. And I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to let them do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And they're never going to get away with it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And the people of Saskatchewan know it.

And I want to say something about the hyperbole and just the ridiculous rhetoric we hear from the opposition about what's going on in Saskatchewan.

The member from Regina Victoria already pointed out that we were losing tens of thousands of people from this province, Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite had the chance to govern. Tens of thousands a year.

And we've turned that around, Mr. Speaker. And Saskatchewan people are filled with hope and optimism about our province's future. Because I'll tell you something . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people do not want to hear the message of doom and gloom and despair from the opposition. They want to hear a message of hope and optimism about the future of this province — that's what this budget delivers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And you know, Mr. Speaker, I thought I had heard it all. I thought I had heard it all until the other day when I heard in this House the member from Carrot River, the member from Carrot River, stand up in this House and do you know what he said?

An Hon. Member: — What did he say?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — He said he was talking to somebody who had moved here from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mr. Speaker. He had asked, he had asked the person well, how do you like it in Saskatchewan? And the answer the member from Carrot River got was, well he complained about the taxes, he said.

And I'd like to say to the member from Carrot River that I find that comparison highly offensive, and I think people in Saskatchewan do and I think Canadians do, and I'll tell you why. Because it trivializes, Mr. Speaker, what is really going on in other parts of the world including places like Bosnia-Herzegovina.

What we see in places like that in the world, Mr. Speaker, is rape, murder, genocide, ethnic cleansing, people destroying schools, destroying hospitals, destroying houses in pursuit of hate, Mr. Speaker. That's what we see in those parts of the world.

And I think what we have to remember, and what I would ask the members opposite to remember, is that we in Saskatchewan are blessed, Mr. Speaker. We are blessed to live in one of the finest places in the world with a wonderful quality of life, Mr. Speaker. And we should not, we should not, Mr. Speaker, be suggesting in any way, shape, or form that things are not a lot better here than in other parts of the world that unfortunately, tragically, and sadly are suffering from war and human misery, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I don't care how much crepe that the

Leader of the Opposition wants to hang all over the Legislative Building, and how much doom and gloom they want to spread, and how much they want to say that Saskatchewan is a bad place to live. Until my dying day, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand up here or wherever I am — and everywhere in this province, in this country, in this world — and say this is the finest place in all the world in which to live, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — So much for references to other parts of the world, Mr. Speaker.

Then we have the Leader of the Opposition who wants to be all things to all people, standing up in this House and saying he doesn't like the tax package which eliminates the flat tax and has the largest income tax in the history of the province. He doesn't like that. The largest income tax cut in the history of the province, Mr. Speaker; he doesn't like that.

He doesn't like the elimination of the flat tax, and he can't stand the fact that lower income people are going to get a break because he wants to award his friends — that's what he wants to do. Then he goes out into the rotunda and talks to the media. And they say to him, well Mr. Leader of the Opposition, you say you don't like this tax package, so we can count on you to make a commitment to reverse it if you're ever elected — very unlikely to happen — but will you make that commitment, Mr. Leader of the Opposition?

You know what his answer is, Mr. Speaker? His answer is no, I won't commit to that. Because he knows, Mr. Speaker, that when the people of the province examine this tax package they know it's fair, Mr. Speaker. And unlike the member from Rosetown-Biggan, they're not interested in a tax cut for the rich, Mr. Speaker, they're interested in a tax cut for ordinary people in Saskatchewan. And that's what this budget delivers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Then we have the usual Tory inspired, all things to all people approach, where they come into this House, Mr. Speaker, and they start talking about what they would do.

And of course they would cut this tax and cut that tax, and spend here and spend there. The member from Kelvington goes to the school trustees and says, we'll double what you get. There's a \$380 million expenditure there, Mr. Speaker.

(1645)

Then we have the member from Rosetown saying, we'll cut the PST by \$190 million, Mr. Speaker. We'll do that. Then we have the member from Swift Current saying that we're going to spend another \$40 million or some such amount in Swift Current. And it goes on and on.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker, in five days, five days, they've spent \$1.2 billion — \$1.2 billion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — One point two billion dollars, and this is

supposed to be a credible opposition that presumes to say that some day they want to govern this province.

Well, I say, Mr. Speaker, with this kind of Tory math, that is never going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — But you know what they want to do, Mr. Speaker? And it is the easiest thing in the world to do. The easiest thing in the world to do, Mr. Speaker, is to spend money on the backs of the next generation. And that's what they want to do, Mr. Speaker.

And when the Leader of the Opposition gets up and says that this government wants to pick somebody's pocket, I say again, Mr. Speaker, there's one thing that we're never going to do like they do — we're not going to pick the pockets of our children, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We saw that, we saw that with the members before, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing it again. We're seeing a plan, a so-called plan from them that would say they're going to put us into deficit and debt. That's what they're going to do because they don't have the courage and the vision, Mr. Speaker, to look to the future; not to short-term political gain; not to vote . . . not to buying people's votes with their own money, Mr. Speaker, but having a vision for the future. And that's what we need in this province. That's what this budget delivers.

And I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. The people over there have no vision, Mr. Speaker. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why, unlike the province of Saskatchewan, they also have no future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order.

The division bells rang from 4:50 p.m. until 4:51 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Draude	Boyd
Gantefoer	Toth	Peters
Eagles	Wall	Bakken
Bjornerud	D'Autremont	McMorris
Weekes	Brkich	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Allchurch	Stewart	Kwiatkowski

Nays — 31

Romanow	Trew	Hagel
Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Melenchuk	Cline	Atkinson
Goulet	Lautermilch	Thomson
Lorje	Serby	Belanger

Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Hamilton
Prebble	Jones	Higgins
Yates	Harper	Axworthy
Junor	Kasperski	Wartman
Addley		

The division bells rang from 4:54 p.m. until 4:55 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 31

Romanow	Trew	Hagel
Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Melenchuk	Cline	Atkinson
Goulet	Lautermilch	Thomson
Lorje	Serby	Belanger
Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Hamilton
Prebble	Jones	Higgins
Yates	Harper	Axworthy
Junor	Kasperski	Wartman
Addley		

Nays — 24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Draude	Boyd
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Eagles	Wall	Bakken
Bjornerud	D'Autremont	McMorris
Weekes	Brkich	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Allchurch	Stewart	Kwiatkowski

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Agriculture and Food
Vote 1**

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

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