

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place again today to present a petition on behalf of producers and Crown grazing leaseholders in the constituency of Cypress Hills. Mr. Speaker, they're very concerned about the renewal policy of the current government and they've asked me to present the petition on their behalf. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition was signed by citizens and producers from the area of Tompkins, Maple Creek, Eastend, Lancer, and Gull Lake.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition to present on behalf of the citizens of Estevan who are very upset with the condition of Highway 47 South. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 47 South in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

And this is signed by the good folks in Estevan.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the province regarding crop insurance. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums for our struggling farmers.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Rose Valley, Kelvington, and Naicam.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today to present on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury and loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

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

This petition, Mr. Speaker, comes from the good people in the Eyebrow and Brownlee area.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Undeterred by the provincial budget the people of Swift Current are still sending a message to the government about the state of the hospital. And this is the latest petition from people in my hometown. And the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to commit its share of funding for a new, a new regional hospital in Swift Current.

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

Mr. Speaker, today's petition is signed by . . . exclusively by residents of the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition about . . . from citizens concerned about rural school closures. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be influenced to stay the closure of Major School unit until the departments of Rural Revitalization and Education can put together a plan on a uniformed front for rural Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks of Major.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about Highway 42. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Central Butte, Riverhurst, and Chaplin.

I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition. This one is with reference to Highway 42 and . . . (inaudible) . . . require for an improvement. And we know that that's very important to the economy and the communities of the area. I would like to read the . . . I would like to read the petition, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

And this is signed by good people from the communities of Central Butte and Riverhurst, a beautiful part of our province, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition from members of the constituency of Kindersley, and they're worried about school closures.

They're worried specifically that the viability of rural Saskatchewan depends on the availability of scholastic opportunity in our area, and specifically that the closure of the Major School will ultimately mean the closure of the town and the community of Major; and that the closure of Major School and the sacrifice of a vibrant community are in direct contradiction with the principles of rural revitalization; and further, that the cost savings in the Landswest School Division by the closure of Major School will be more than offset by the loss of businesses, families, and investment in the area.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray your Hon. Assembly may be influenced to stay the closure of Major School until the departments of Rural Revitalization and Education can put together a plan on a uniformed front for rural Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Major, Saskatchewan, and Compeer.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here dealing with prescription drug costs.

The Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan: the petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly show that prescription drugs and the maintaining and improving quality of life for many Saskatchewan residents and their families; that these individuals are already facing serious financial pressures from bearing other costs of living including

health care or residing in Saskatchewan; that the current administration must not be allowed to balance its deficit budget by removing the annual deductible amount for prescription drugs for Saskatchewan residents and their families.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reinstate a reasonable annual deductible amount for prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Bladworth and Davidson.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens that are concerned about fair Crown leaseholders. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Shellbrook and Biggar.

I so present.

Mr. Lorenz: — Mr. Speaker, a petition to improve highways, Highway 42:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be petitioned to cause the government to make necessary repairs on Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life, to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in this area.

So we humbly pray.

From the residents of Central Butte.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents concerned with the condition of Highway 22, particularly from Junction 6 to Junction 20. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 22 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Strasbourg, Earl Grey, and Southey.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise

in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are very, very concerned with the government's handling of the Crown land leases. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Medstead and Glenbush.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received.

A petition concerning the closure of Major School; and

Previously tabled petitions being addendums to sessional paper nos. 12, 13, and 19.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Social Services: how much funding did the Kids First program receive in the fiscal year 2001-2002?

And I have similar questions for the fiscal year of 2002 and 2003.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Learning: in reference to the \$32.4 million to be expended under the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation in 2003-2004, what is the split between K to 12 and post-secondary capital projects; and what is the amortization rate under this program for these projects?

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety: were managers at the Regina correctional facility warned by guards as to the danger of holding inmates in the auditorium from which recent inmate escapes occurred?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this legislature, 14 students from the Rainbow Youth Centre's road to employment program. They're accompanied today by Jen Reid.

I had the very good pleasure of meeting with them last year. Raylene's not here this year but we'll have to say hello to her anyway. But I hope you enjoy today's proceedings and that we have a good visit later on. And I'd urge all members to say a big welcome and a big Ta wow to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, I'd like to join with the member in welcoming the young people from Rainbow Youth Centre and we trust that you'll find this afternoon very informative. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today in this House to introduce two people sitting in your gallery. They are guests of one of our caucus researchers, Jessica Waiser.

Mr. Speaker, Daniela Roschinski and Katja Blasche are visiting Saskatchewan all the way from Magdeburg, Germany.

Last Friday Ms. Roschinski successfully defended her master's thesis in history at the University of Saskatchewan. For the last three years, under the guidance of Dr. Bill Waiser of the university's Department of History, Daniela has been working on her thesis, "Wild vs. Mild West: A Binary or Symbiotic Unit?" One year was spent in Saskatoon and the last two in Germany. Daniela has always exhibited a keen curiosity for Canada and the West, Mr. Speaker.

And this is Katja's first visit to Canada. Later this month Katja is going to have an interview at the University of Calgary for a spot in their human resources development or human resources management Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) program.

And so I ask all the members of the Assembly to welcome these two fine guests today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Women's National Hockey Tournament

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Esso women's national hockey tournament was held March 12 to 16 in Saskatoon with two local women, Laurie Alexander and Robin Nuttall, both from Pense, being key players on the Saskatchewan team.

(13:45)

Game one against Newfoundland proved to be a great opener as

Team Sask won 8 to nothing. Laurie Alexander was named player of the game with two goals, and Robin Nuttall shared the shutout with fellow netminder, Lenita Hanson.

Game two against the defending champions, Quebec, was a challenge for Team Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan women came up short with a loss of 3 to 2. Robin Nuttall was key in keeping Saskatchewan close and was awarded the player of the game for game two.

Not bad — two games with both players of the game from Pense.

Team Saskatchewan went on to win game three against Nova Scotia and game four against New Brunswick.

In playoff action, Team Saskatchewan went on to play Team BC (British Columbia). Team BC, like several of the other teams in the tournament, had Olympic players on their roster. Nancy Drolet scored twice, with American Olympians Cammi Granato and Shelley Looney adding to the stats. Team BC won 3-1 against Team Saskatchewan.

Team Saskatchewan went on to finish in fifth place and Team Alberta won the tournament with no less than six Saskatchewan players on their roster. Laurie Alexander was quoted in the *StarPhoenix* as saying:

We gave a WNHL team a run for their money. They train and compete together all year long . . . we've been together 3 weekends total . . . Give us a whole year and maybe things would have been different.

Congratulations to Team Saskatchewan women, and to Laurie Alexander and Robin Nuttall.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Investing in Healthy Families

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to building for the future and that is why, Mr. Speaker, with this budget we are continuing our tradition of managing the province's finances in a responsible, prudent manner, while at the same time meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people.

To us, Mr. Speaker, meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people means boosting health care to a record \$2.5 billion in order to improve the health and well-being of families across the province.

To us, Mr. Speaker, meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people means investing \$19 million in funding for medical equipment. It means investing \$74 million to support collective agreements for 30,000 health care professionals. It means a continued investment of \$3 million for new initiatives to address recruitment and retention of health providers. And it means investing \$61 million over the next two years in health care capital funding.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing across a broad range of health services to improve the health and self-reliance of

Saskatchewan families. And we are investing to change the way services are delivered so that we can continue to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people as we build for the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Hospital's 90th Anniversary

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year marks the 90th anniversary of the opening of Saskatchewan Hospital.

It is the only long-term psychiatric facility in the province. At one time it was home to over 2,000 patients. Today with deinstitutionalization and advances in psychiatric medicine, it accommodates one-tenth that number. The facility is large, drab, and forbidding. Recently Glenn Wouters, a member of the North Prairie Regional Health Authority, said that the facility should either undergo major renovations or be replaced.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that mental health treatment has evolved. We no longer institutionalize anywhere near the number of patients we did 90 years ago. Nonetheless there continues to be a need for a residential facility and for trained staff to care for the needs of psychiatric patients.

The province is in the midst of phasing out the designation of registered psychiatric nurse. Mental health is supposed to be part of general nurse training, but significantly the nurses' education program brochure makes no mention of psychiatric component. I question whether nursing students will be exposed to mental health care in the hope that some of them will choose to focus their careers on this aspect.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Hospital was one of the first public facilities built in our then new province. The provision of a modern, pleasant facility with trained staff committed to their patients continues to be a priority we must respect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Research and Development Programs

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our future is wide open. One way we ensure our quality of life, promote economic growth, and maintain our competitive standing is through an aggressive and innovative research and development program. I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, that this budget provides more than \$145 million to fund research in the major segments of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, the synchrotron at the University of Saskatchewan is scheduled to open this January, an investment that will generate even more investment, more research, and more direct jobs in existing and new technology . . . high-tech companies.

Next door to the university is Innovation Place. There and at the university, \$12.6 million is being directed to research for primary and value-added agriculture. Agriculture remains one of our industries R&D (research and development) is bringing into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, one reason our oil and gas industry is revitalized is the work being done at the Petroleum Technology Research Centre at the University of Regina which this budget continues to support.

The Saskatchewan Forest Centre in Prince Albert will ensure a continuing forest industry through development of new technologies and improved reforestation programs.

Mr. Speaker, this budget gives funding to new road construction materials, ongoing new scientific, and the list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a forward-looking budget for a province with a great wide open future, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Whitetail and Mule Deer Producers Association Convention

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Saskatchewan Whitetail and Mule Deer Producers Association convention in Saskatoon. Other MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) attending from this side of the House were the members from Saskatchewan Rivers, Shellbrook-Spiritwood, and Redberry Lake.

Aside from sampling some delicious venison, cold cuts, and sausage, we also heard lectures on trophy ranching, value added to venison, and cost-effective rationing. Further, Mr. Speaker, the convention updated the association's strategy for dealing with chronic wasting disease. The Saskatchewan association has been recognized internationally as a leader in monitoring this disastrous disease.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite members to join with me in congratulating SWAMDPA (Saskatchewan Whitetail and Mule Deer Producers Association) for its convention and ongoing success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Melville Millionaires Win Sherwood Conference

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to congratulate the Melville Millionaires junior hockey team. And, Mr. Speaker, I decided to use the proper forum for politicians — the legislature — not four minutes between periods.

Last Friday the Millionaires added another chapter to their Cinderella comeback this season by winning the Sherwood Conference of the SJHL (Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League).

Mr. Speaker, hockey in rural Saskatchewan communities is more than just one team against another, it is also one town against another. The winner of the game gives residents of a particular town bragging rights. This is a time-honoured Saskatchewan tradition.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the weekend's version of this tradition is really a tale of two cities — one being Melville and the other Yorkton, the home of the Deputy Premier. Friday night in a typical battle of Highway 10, the Mills put the series to bed with a 12-1 victory in game number six to finish the series four games to two. And that was without me speaking at ice level or cheering them on, Mr. Speaker.

And tonight, Mr. Speaker, the Millionaires roll into Humboldt with two winning series under their belt to take on the Broncos in the provincial championship. Good luck in Humboldt to the Mills organization, the players, Steve Young and his staff, and his fans. Go Mills go. Right on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Assiniboia Southern Rebels Advance to Keystone Cup

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the Assiniboia Junior Southern Rebels on winning the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, again.

Mr. Speaker, en route to the championship the Southern Rebels defeated the Regina Capitals in a best of seven series and then went on to the provincial playoffs against Warman Valley Crusaders where they won three straight games to advance to the Keystone Cup. And, Mr. Speaker, the Keystone Cup will be held in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, the week of April 10 to 13.

Mr. Speaker, in the 11 years of operation, the Assiniboia Southern Rebels have won the league in seven of those years and they have won five consecutive league champions . . . championships. The top scorer of the Assiniboia Rebels was Mr. Dan Cristo, a local Assiniboia boy, and the top defenceman was Chase Schafer, who is from Tugaska.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer congratulations to the team: the president, Dale Lessmeister; the manager, Randy Cuthill; coaches Jerry Volsky and Paul Tendler; and all of the personnel, the players, and the families that supported the Assiniboia Southern Rebels. In addition I'd like to pay a special tribute to Marg Erfle who is better known to hockey fans in Assiniboia as Grandma Dynamite. She's in her 80s and is basically the team mascot and a very good supporter.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer congratulations and good luck to the Assiniboia Southern Rebels at the Keystone Cup.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Harassment Allegations Against Civil Servant

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

The front page of today's *StarPhoenix* tells the story of Murdoch Carriere, director of the fire management branch in Prince Albert, who has been harassing female employees for years. Last October six of those female employees filed harassment complaints against Murdoch Carriere. So the

government hired an independent investigator who concluded in December that Mr. Carriere has been sexually harassing and intimidating female employees for years.

And, Mr. Speaker, what did the NDP government do about it? Well according to a memo written by the deputy minister on February 12, 2003, the NDP decided to make Mr. Murdoch Carriere a senior adviser to the Environment department at \$85,000 per year.

Mr. Speaker, why didn't the NDP fire Murdoch Carriere after they found out that he was sexually harassing women?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As minister of the Public Service Commission I'm going to premise my remarks with something that might be interpreted to be a bit personal but it is as well the official policy of this government — and that is that I find and that we find sexual harassment in the workplace outrageous and completely unacceptable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, we do have a zero tolerance policy and we, in fact, put this policy in place in 1993. And we're a government who believes it's important to have labour laws, including occupational health and safety, which give employees a forum to bring forward complaints of this nature.

Now we put this policy in place in 1993. We further strengthened it, Mr. Speaker, in 1999. And I will affirm today that this policy is being followed.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, when the government does nothing about the violation of harassment policy, it is as much as condoning it, so they cannot say and should not say that they have zero tolerance.

Mr. Speaker, as director of the fire management and forest protection branch, Mr. Carriere is responsible for more than 140 staff, many of whom are women. Last October, six of those women complained that Murdoch Carriere has harassed them and after two months of investigation, Robert Gillies concluded that Mr. Carriere had been harassing his female employees for years. And I quote:

... both in terms of abuse of authority and in terms of inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of the Premier of this province and his government to ensure harassment-free workplaces for all government employees. Yet the NDP has decided to keep Murdoch Carriere and make him a senior adviser to the government.

Mr. Speaker, why is Murdoch Carriere still working for the NDP government? What message does that send to the women who have been humiliated, intimidated, and sexually harassed by this man for years?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all I would just say that complaints are investigated from the date they're received because until then they aren't complaints.

The second thing I will say is that in any situation the person is removed from the workplace when an investigation is taking place, and this would be the case in I believe any situation that the member might be referring to.

So I can assure this House that we take it completely seriously, that the employee is removed from the workplace, and that the entire procedure has to be followed because this may, in any particular allegation, be true or not true. But I think everybody deserves a process to be followed before they are judged and disciplined, and that would be what would happen, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, what the minister is overlooking is that the investigator's report has validated that this sexual harassment complaint was true and has validation to it. The points were made to the investigator, the investigator gave his report, and turned it over to the government. There is no question.

Mr. Speaker, in the course of that investigation into the actions of Murdoch Carriere the investigator interviewed Duncan Campbell, the human resources contact in the fire management and forest protection branch. And Mr. Campbell said many employees in the Prince Albert office have complained about harassment by Murdoch Carriere. According to the investigator's report, and I quote:

“... there have been complaints of Murdoch kissing staff, touching them, and acting inappropriately.

Usually staff ... (don't want) to make a formal complaint because they fear ... (they're going) to lose their job. Staff have a genuine fear of retaliation.”

Mr. Speaker, Murdoch Carriere has been harassing and ...

The Speaker: — Would the member proceed to her question.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what does it take for the Premier to do the right thing and terminate the government employment of Murdoch Carriere?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to mention that this policy first existed in 1993, was further strengthened in '99, and continues to be strengthened as we find ways. There are typical measures that can be applied when violations occur. They would include things like assignment of new duties, suspension without pay, anti-harassment counselling and training, and yes, it can include termination of employment.

But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that an employee who's under

investigation is removed from the workplace and would continue to be removed from the workplace until all investigations are completed, and at that point final determination would be made on disciplinary action.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's excuses ring shallow, I'm sure, in the ears of the many employees who have been sexually violated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, on February 12, 2003 the deputy minister of Environment wrote a memo to all six women who complained about Murdoch Carriere. And in that memo the deputy minister said he had concluded that Murdoch Carriere had harassed these women, and the deputy minister indicated that Mr. Carriere would be reassigned with the Environment department.

On that same day, Mr. Speaker, the deputy minister wrote to all fire management and forest protection branch employees, and in that memo he announced Murdoch Carriere was being appointed senior adviser to the assistant deputy minister, beginning in May. He went on to praise Mr. Carriere for his leadership and valuable contribution to the branch.

Mr. Speaker, not only did the NDP decide that Murdoch Carriere should keep his \$85,000 government salary, they actually made him a senior adviser to the NDP government.

So I ask today, Mr. Speaker, which one of the Premier's cabinet ministers over there was responsible for the decision to promote Murdoch Carriere instead of firing him for harassing his employees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reiterate that myself and our government have zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And when the process of all investigations is completed, there will be a final outcome of disciplinary action. We are not there yet, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing I will say is one of the very reasons why the occupational health and safety code requires confidentiality is to protect people from fear of coming forward. When people breach that confidentiality, they put at risk the comfort level of people in coming forward with allegations. So I ask the members to, once in a while, consider what it is they do when they so freely breach confidentiality in all cases.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the six women who were sexually violated I'm sure will take offence with that minister's comments.

And that minister needs to be charged with her own government's cover-up and hiding of everything from SPUDCO to this case, and many other things included for years now.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has known since December that Murdoch Carriere has been harassing female employees for years. And yet someone in the NDP government made the decision to give Mr. Carriere a promotion and make him a senior adviser to that government. Someone decided the punishment for years of harassing female employees was that Mr. Carriere should keep his \$85,000 salary and move to Regina.

So, Mr. Speaker, does the Premier have no honour? Will the Premier fire the Minister of the Environment for condoning sexual harassment in his department and consenting to punish Murdoch Carriere by making him a senior adviser to the government at \$85,000 per year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I will reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that I assure this House that we have zero tolerance. I will further assure this House that because of confidentiality, I became aware of the facts they became aware of in the newspaper today — the same way they became aware of them. And I will further say that the appropriate action of removal from the workplace will be in place until all investigations are completed, at which point a final determination on appropriate disciplinary action would be taken.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister had a report handed to that government, to her or to the Minister of the Environment — it should have been to the whole government — in December last.

And I would like to make one more comment. The minister keeps talking about zero tolerance. Well action or inaction speaks much louder than words.

Mr. Speaker, one of the women who complained about . . . Murdoch called her at home a number of times and then invited himself over to her house. She told the investigator that she had allowed him to come over because, and I quote:

“I wanted the job so bad, I guess I just thought to myself just do this, and get it over with, and maybe he'll get me the job.”

Mr. Speaker, Murdoch Carriere did go over to her house and once there he pulled her down onto the couch attempting to kiss her. She states that she felt intimidated, but that since her diagnosis of breast cancer Mr. Carriere has left her alone.

So, Mr. Speaker, does the Premier think that this kind of behaviour should be rewarded with a promotion? Why would the NDP government reward Mr. Carriere's harassment of many women over a period of years by making him a senior

adviser to the government at \$85,000 per year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I give the House my insurance that we have a zero tolerance policy. We will ensure that that policy is followed. But I will confirm, for the members opposite, the reason why personal information is protected under occupational health and safety is so that all the people whose hands information might come into, do not then, in the common course of activity, accidentally gossip about it or tell someone.

I was privy to this information when I looked at the newspaper this morning, and there are reasons for that, Mr. Speaker. The reasons are because until these investigations are completed and disciplinary action is decided, the process is not complete. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this question, this final question should go to the Minister of the Environment because he is the one that is responsible for this, he is the boss of these people who . . . especially this man who was his director.

Mr. Speaker, another woman who complained about Mr. Carriere's harassment said he forced himself on her in a car after a golf game. She told the investigator that on another occasion he told her she should go home from an office golf tournament early because he wanted to come over. He then went to her house and waited there until 1 a.m. However, she had decided not to return home that night and the next day she said Mr. Carriere called her and demanded to know why she hadn't come home that night. He said he was upset because he had waited until 1 o'clock in the morning in front of her house because he had a gift for her.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of behaviour by Mr. Carriere in relation to a female employee is totally unacceptable. It's clear harassment. And when added to a dozen other events, I'm . . .

The Speaker: — Would the member, would the member go directly to the question, please.

Ms. Julé: — Why hasn't the NDP done the right thing and fired Murdoch Carriere? I ask that of the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that no one feels more strongly about this or takes it more seriously than I do. I find sexual harassment to be repugnant and totally out of date with the times we live in.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, there is a policy. There is a process. There was an investigation; there may be further investigation. And until that process is completed and a final determination is made, I will just reiterate that our policy is zero tolerance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, the investigator's report includes

some very serious allegations — allegations that may constitute sexual assault. According to the newspaper, one of the women has filed a complaint with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

My question to the government, Mr. Speaker, is: has the government turned the investigator's report over to the RCMP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I can advise the House that I am aware that the RCMP is conducting an investigation into the allegations of Mr. Carriere. I also would like to say that it will be the position of this government and this minister that we will allow the police to do the investigation in the course of their duties. We will not be commenting upon the allegations against Mr. Carriere.

And I would also add, Mr. Speaker, that every person who believes in the due process of law will support that individuals should be investigated by the police, tried by the courts, and not tried in the Legislative Assembly or in the court of public opinion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, on May 8, 2001, the NDP House Leader made the following statement, and I quote:

. . . (if) any member of this legislature or any member of the general public has any, any, any evidence to suggest . . . inappropriate . . . (behaviour), they have a responsibility to forward that to the proper process, which is the police.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has been in possession of this harassment report since December 20 of last year. Why wasn't it turned over to the police? Why is the NDP more interested in protecting a sexual harasser than protecting its victims?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I realize that the member has his scripted questions and that was his second question. But in the first answer, Mr. Speaker, I have already advised that member that I am aware that the RCMP is conducting an investigation into the allegations against Mr. Carriere.

The member has asked, has the matter been referred to the RCMP? The question has been answered. Yes, the matter has been referred to the RCMP, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP will now investigate the matter as is their duty. That's their job. It's not the job of the opposition; it's not my job. It's the job of the police, and the police will do their job and they will do it very well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, my questions are not nearly as well scripted as the Minister of Justice. If he'd been paying attention to them, he would have noticed that I would ask the question . . . and I will repeat it. I'll keep it short and simple for the minister. Why has this government not turned over the

report issued to it in regards to Murdoch Carriere to the RCMP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, what has been turned over to the RCMP or not turned over to the RCMP or the manner in which the RCMP is conducting their investigation or the evidence that they may or may not have is a matter for the RCMP. And we are not going to get into the business of discussing with members through this House or in the court of public opinion how the investigation of the RCMP is progressing.

Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is the body that should investigate allegations of criminal activity against any citizen in this province. That is what they are doing and that they will do their job very well without any assistance in their investigatory techniques from that member, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, the report alleges that Mr. Carriere used his position and his political connections in the NDP Party to intimidate and sexually harass women. The report found him guilty of sexually harassing female employees. The incidents that involved . . . with incidents that involved unwanted physical contact.

Mr. Speaker, this man should have been fired. Instead he keeps his job at \$85,000 a year and the NDP government withheld the report from the RCMP. It makes you wonder exactly what kind of political connections he has.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Why is this government protecting a sexual harasser?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I find it disturbing that there is a pattern in this House over the last few years that every time there is an allegation made against someone in this province . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, every time there is an allegation made against someone in this province, it seems to be the role of the opposition party to jump to conclusions and to try to try the person in the court of public opinion or in the Legislative Assembly. And most people who are reasonable, Mr. Speaker, will know that there are processes to deal with allegations against individuals.

The member repeatedly gets up and says that the RCMP doesn't have access to some report. The member should be aware, Mr. Speaker, that the RCMP have powers of subpoena and search warrant. And if there is a report that the RCMP wants, the RCMP will get that report and do their investigation without the very helpful advice of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. But what is most important is the due process of law, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP have a report. They sit on it for months. Suddenly the report is made public and then they say they have zero tolerance to sexual harassment.

Mr. Speaker, this man preyed on women. And I don't claim to understand how those women may have felt but, Mr. Speaker, I have a daughter. My colleagues, many of them, have daughters. And I want to commit to the people of Saskatchewan that if we win the next election, we will not be like the NDP . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — . . . and allow this type of misbehaviour to occur.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, we believe that every female employee of the government should be treated the way we want our own loved ones to be treated. Mr. . . .

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, every woman employee of the government should be protected by its government from sexual harassment. They should be treated with respect and dignity. Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP not only follow their sexual harassment policy but protect an employee and promote an employee that they knew was sexually harassing women?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, there isn't a member of this Assembly that does not take the issue of sexual harassment seriously. The only difference between members on that side of the House and this side of the House is that we're not going to try to take political advantage of an unfortunate situation the way in which we saw the Leader of the Opposition just do, Mr. Speaker.

This is a serious matter that is being taken seriously by government, that is being investigated by the RCMP, Mr. Speaker, that is being investigated under due process in the Public Service Commission. It is not a matter to be playing politics with and it is not a matter in which the Leader of the Opposition should grandstand in a very political way as he just did, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are asking, what do you have to do in that NDP government to get fired? Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader sits there, was responsible for \$28 million of taxpayers' money to be lost, to be squandered, and he wasn't fired. He covered it up for six years and he wasn't fired.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance leaked the budget a full week prior to its announcement. The Minister of Finance was not fired.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we find out that the Minister of Environment knew that he had a sexual predator as an employee. He had a report on his desk. The report has been leaked. And the Minister of Environment did nothing, has done nothing. And now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP suffers the disgrace of a cover-up.

Mr. Speaker, the employee still has the job and the Minister of Environment still has his job. I want to hear from the NDP government, what do they have to do in Saskatchewan to get fired for incompetence and doing a lousy job?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, this is an individual in this House who clearly will stop at nothing to gain power. That is quite clear, Mr. Speaker. This is an individual who will make all kinds of allegations against citizens in this province in order to gain power, Mr. Speaker. And one needs look no further than today's *StarPhoenix* where the Leader of the Opposition says, in reference to Mr. Grant Schmidt, quote:

I think most people in the Saskatchewan Party (listen to this, Mr. Speaker) didn't feel they would trust Grant Schmidt with their family, their business interests, (and) . . . their finances. They just didn't feel they could make that commitment.

That is a shameful, baseless allegation because this is an opposition, Mr. Speaker, that will stop at nothing in order to gain power.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 8 — The Youth Justice Administration Act

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 8, The Youth Justice Administration Act, be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The division bells rang from 14:24 until 14:34.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 26

Hermanson Toth Heppner

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

Julé
Gantfoer
Wakefield
Eagles
Bakken
Dearborn
Weekes
Allchurch

Krawetz
Bjornerud
Stewart
McMorris
Wall
Brkich
Lorenz
Hillson

Draude
Elhard
Harpauer
D'Autremont
Huyghebaert
Wiberg
Hart

Nays — 28

Addley
Lautermilch
Cline
Lorjé
Van Mulligen
Junor
Hamilton
Jones
Wartman
Iwanchuk

Crofford
Serby
Sonntag
Kasperski
Belanger
Nilson
Harper
Higgins
Yates

Hagel
Melenchuk
Osika
Goulet
Thomson
Atkinson
Forbes
Trew
McCall

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely pleased this afternoon to stand on behalf of the government and table a written response to question no. 7.

The Speaker: — Response to question 7 has been tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand today to respond to the budget speech of 2003 on behalf of the people from the Kelvington-Wadena constituency. I'd like to begin by congratulating the two new members of this Assembly, the member from Saskatoon Fairview and the member from Battleford-Cut Knife.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Battleford-Cut Knife convincingly won his by-election with an exceptionally large turnout. Everyone in that constituency knows that he's a well-respected man and part of his win can be contributed to the respect and hard work of our leader, the member from Rosetown. Also part of the win is the acceptance of the plan and the vision of the Saskatchewan Party for growing the province and shaping a positive future for our children.

So I congratulate both of these people and welcome them into the Assembly.

This is the eighth budget speech I have heard since my election in 1995, and truthfully, Mr. Speaker, I believe there has never been one delivered that caused less excitement. Of course you know the speech was leaked a week early, so the actual budget was rather anticlimactic for everyone except those involved in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, the leak indicated that agriculture would see a \$40 million increase in funding this year. In actual fact, for the second straight year, we saw a \$40 million decrease in the Department of Agriculture. But those involved in agriculture have learned to expect nothing from this government — that way they are never disappointed.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government was elected in 1991 by people who were told that we had no future in this province until we dealt with the debt and the deficit that had a stranglehold on our future. We were told that the debt has skyrocketed to an unbelievable \$12.1 billion and that we're leaving our children with a legacy of mismanagement. So we were supposed to tighten our belts. We had to work together for the good of the province.

So over the next 10 years we saw over 55 hospitals close in Saskatchewan. We saw schools close in the name of efficiency. We saw our proud and esteemed university fight for survival in a competitive environment where the odds were stacked against them. We saw our highways crumble and our municipal road structure abused. We saw our water and sewer systems decay to the point that people's lives were endangered. And, Mr. Speaker, we lost our children and our neighbours as they moved to provinces outside of Saskatchewan to build their lives and their future.

Mr. Speaker, we watched all this happen with dismay but also with hope that the sacrifice would be worth it in the long run. We hoped that when the day came that this government actually spent less money than they took in, that the people would finally reap some reward for their work and their sacrifices.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, we dared to dream that we'd have some choices in our own lives, that government would accept their responsibility to provide infrastructure and environment for business, and that we could finally begin to build a future for ourselves.

But, Mr. Speaker, instead we found ourselves with a coalition government that wasn't elected by the people — a coalition that had just days before campaigned against each other on platforms that were diametrically opposite and then decided in the dead of the night that they would . . . they had the moral authority to govern. Shortly after that we had a new Premier who was also not elected as Premier leading this coalition government who was not elected by the people.

And last Friday, Mr. Speaker, we had the second budget brought down by this non-elected leader with no mandate who, by their very own admission, have spent \$1 million a day more than they've taken in — that's \$1.1 billion deficit since this Premier took office.

Mr. Speaker, the debt this government has run up since the new Premier took power is over \$12.2 billion total. All the work and

the sacrifices that people incurred during the '90s is down the tube. The future under this government today is as bleak as it was in 1991. Actually it's worse because our infrastructure has decayed in the meantime.

Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that people are apathetical. They've been told for over a decade that, well nine-tenths of Canadians saw economic growth that was between average and phenomenal, and that if we continued to bite the bullet we would become nearly average. And now we find ourselves with a government that has an out-of-control spending habit, spending our money.

They didn't just spend our money here at home, Mr. Speaker. They took it out of country, overseas, wherever there seemed to be an exciting place to gamble — that's where our hard-earned tax dollars were spent. In the meantime people just stayed at home with their nose to the grindstone with not enough energy left at the end of the day to fight.

It's not surprising to me, Mr. Speaker, that few people were really interested in this budget. It was more than apparent on budget day that even with all the invitations and the hoopla made of the budget day address, that the galleries were not full, that the overflow rooms were empty, and that many of the familiar faces that we came to expect to see on budget day were not here.

The most asked question on budget day . . . well, maybe it was the second most asked question was, when's the next election? I think the most asked question was how in the world did this new Minister of Finance come up with a figure of 6.8 per cent economic growth? It's pretty unbelievable when you think that it's over twice as high as any of the other industrialized nations are predicting.

Can you imagine what response would be from this government if the Saskatchewan Party would suggest that we would have this type of growth? This current government would go ballistic saying that we were unreasonable, that the figures couldn't be substantiated.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the majority of families sit around the breakfast table and talk about the economic growth potential of Saskatchewan, and they probably don't care that the Finance minister is basing his economic projections on totally unrealistic numbers. But I do know they're going to figure out, when next year the debt is larger than the \$500 million the minister is projecting and their taxes will either increase or they will again have fewer services, that there was a real problem with this budget.

My colleagues have discussed many of the various aspects of the budget but I want to elaborate on one important issue that's been brought up many times in the newspapers and in articles. It's been bragged about as being an important part of this government's spending but it's never really been discussed in detail and this government has given misinformation to every citizen of this wonderful province about this issue, and that's the issue of K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) education.

First of all let me remind members that Saskatchewan holds the dubious title of expecting taxpayers owning property to pay

more of the cost of education than any other province — nearly 60 per cent of the cost of education is borne by property owners. This issue was not addressed in the budget by anything other than a statement: this government will study the situation.

Mr. Speaker, the government, SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents), SASBO (Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials), STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), and citizens have been discussing and studying this issue for years. The government's commitment to yet another study is nothing short of a stalling tactic to put the issue on hold for another period of time.

Many people around this province are not aware that last year there were 18 school divisions in Saskatchewan that received absolutely no funding from the provincial government — not a nickel, nothing.

(14:45)

Many other school divisions received just a pittance. Somewhere between 10 and 30 per cent of their funding comes from the province; the remaining costs are covered by property owners. Every school trustee and every property owner knows that there is no room for more tax increases on property, whether it be rural or urban areas.

The latest budget increases the equalization factor to point four per cent which means that in areas with high assessments and declining enrolments, the amount of provincial funding will decrease. This seemingly small change in the formula will actually amount to \$15 million more that will have to be picked up by local taxpayers.

I've asked for the information on the number of school boards who will be affected by this change, but I have not received the information yet. But I do expect that increasing the equalization factor will put more boards in a zero grant position after January of 2004.

The former minister of Learning, now the Minister of Finance, never really seemed to grasp the fact that high assessments, high property values, does not necessarily equate to a high income or a cash flow.

Farmers whose land values have been increased due to reassessment, but have seen their income drop dramatically because of drought or frost or whatever reason, are cash strapped. Education tax is considered an input cost yet it has nothing to do with the cost of farming as a whole. It's a cost of farming in Saskatchewan.

I have heard people say, well it's deductible. Well guess what? You have to be paying taxes before that matters.

The same can be said for property owners in urban centres. Should you be paying more in education tax because your home is more valuable than your neighbour's? Should you be penalized for caring enough to look after your property? Who decides, and on what criteria is that decision based on what . . . and the value made?

Until this government recognizes its responsibility and pays for the cost of educating our children, there can be no fairness.

In the past 10 years the government has made changes to the foundation operating grant which shifts the cost of education from various stakeholders to another group of stakeholders. It shifts the priorities of government from various aspects of education to others such as special education per pupil rates between urban and rural centres, or even emphasizing one aspect of education like on-line learning from others. But this government has never taken a financial responsibility for those decisions.

Shifting these responsibilities gives the government the chance to brag about new money for new initiatives. This would only be true if more new money was actually put into the budget than was required to cover the expenses. This hasn't happened.

The only thing this government does is cut the pieces of pie in different sizes. It never increases the size of the pie.

The minister of Learning, or Education as he used to be called over the past number of years, likes to stand in this House and brag about covering the cost of the collective agreement with our teachers. What they fail to mention is that while the overall dollars put into education may amount to the amount of the money negotiated in the agreement, less than 40 per cent of school divisions receive even close to the increase in salaries because of the foundation operating grant formula.

The FOG (foundation operating grant) grant, which is very appropriately named since it does leave most people in a fog, uses the assessment of the school divisions and the number of students as part of the determining factors of the amount of money divisions will get from the government.

This year the increase in salaries through the collective agreement settlement amount to \$23.6 million. The government did put \$23.6 million in that they claim to pay for salaries, but because of the grant formula putting responsibility on property owners, they are not paying for the whole cost of salary increases in every division. Instead the government gets to spend part of that \$23.6 million twice. First, by announcing they are paying for the salaries and then, because there is money left over through the allocation of the FOG grant, the government can announce funding for community schools, changes in the per student grant for urban versus rural schools, on-line learning, and the list goes on.

This year's increase in K to 12 funding falls far short of the estimated school board expenses for the year. The teachers' salaries, increments and reclassifications, and administration allowances will cost \$25.4 million. Administration and support staff salaries will increase \$8.7 million. The increase in utilities, insurance, transportation, etc., will be nearly \$4 million for an overall cost increase in K to 12 education of \$38.4 million.

This government has supposedly allocated 32 million more in this year's budget. However, of that 32 million, there's already been 16.2 million of that spent on salaries for September to March of this budget year through special warrants.

For the government to keep its promise to even pay the salary

increase for the year, the entire 16.2 million would have to be spent in April to December, leaving no money for the balance of the year. There is absolutely no money allocated for the \$15 million of costs above salaries. There is no new money for new programs or initiatives.

In the area of capital funding we see the Education Infrastructure Finance Corporation has been dissolved and spending for capital is put back into department expenditures. The capital funding announced in the budget for new work is \$16.215 million. That's about half of the commitment made last year. On top of that, the school restoration program has been delayed another year.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago this government sought and paid for an extensive review of the role of the school. It was determined by stakeholders, teachers, parents, students, school boards, and integrated agencies that a model based on the community school concept would best suit our children in this society as we move into the new millennium.

This budget speech failed to make any significant inroads into the implementation of the School^{PLUS} initiative, yet four ministers of the Crown signed an agreement to work towards implementing the program. We're not seeing any true integration of departments to address the issues.

Mr. Speaker, this government is planning for a decline in the student population of Saskatchewan of 30,000 students by the end of this decade. One of the huge differences between this government and the Saskatchewan Party is this: we are not planning on managing a decline, we are planning to grow this province. We know that the growth will mean more students, more teachers, increasing the number of schools and communities working together to plan their future.

We recognize the value of the School^{PLUS} model and we know that by integrating services, we'll not just save money as we cut back on duplication, but we will ensure the most efficient use of the time and skills of our professionals.

We know that education is the key to success for individuals and for the province as a whole. We must ensure that funding is available to ensure all students have access to public education.

We believe that school boards must remain autonomous. Decisions on amalgamation must be made on the basis of improved education for students, not threats from this government.

Parents must have more access to their board members, more choices for their children's education, and more involvement in their children's school life. It takes a whole community to raise a child, no matter what community or country you live in.

The education of our Aboriginal children must be a priority for all governments in order to grow our province and our economy.

This government is playing a shell game with the finances of this province. We must work diligently to ensure our children have bright futures in this province or wherever they may choose to live.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment, and I will not be supporting the original motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am indeed pleased and it's always an honour to be in this House to be debating the budget speech.

Mr. Speaker, obviously on this budget speech, I'll be strongly supporting the government motion supporting the budget and I'll be voting against the amendment of the Sask Party that presents a doom and gloom argument and a spirit of negativity.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to cover my presentation vis-à-vis the general aspect of the budget as well as the specifics in regards to the North and Aboriginal people, and in between also making a commentary in Cree explaining the budget as well as doing some concluding remarks.

Mr. Speaker, as I look at the budget, you know, for this year, and I've looked at, of course, many budgets over the years, this is our, of course, 10th consecutive balanced budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — And as I looked at our balanced budget, I looked at the balanced approach not only in regards to the finances of the province but in regards to the life of the province in the economic realm, in the social realm, in the cultural realm, the health realm. And, Mr. Speaker, as I looked at the budget, this was good news in many areas, and particularly in health, education, municipalities, and also a growing partnership with northerners and First Nations and Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, as I looked at the health budget, the facts speak for themselves. On the health side we have a record \$2.5 billion. This is an 8 per cent increase. This 8 per cent increase includes 27 million in capital and \$19 million on medical equipment. Mr. Speaker, this is leading the way in Canada amongst the different provinces.

We also are looking at the fact that as I look back on the Sask Party statements over the years, and particularly in the last election, this opposition who are now making all kinds of promises which a lot of people are not trusting, they're making a lot of promises but in fact they said they would freeze health care.

Secondly, when I look at another major item on the budget, there is also the aspect of education. On the education budget we have a record \$1.2 billion. Mr. Speaker, this is a 5.2 per cent increase in the operating budget. Mr. Speaker, as I looked at the education budget, I noticed that there was also \$76 million on capital. And also for the students out there, in regards to the student loan, it's been increased to 66 million for the 17,000 students that are out there in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a continuation of our efforts in highways at \$296 million.

And, Mr. Speaker, as well, we have the increase of the

municipalities. The municipal revenue-sharing grant is and has been increased by 15.4 per cent this year. This is the second of three \$10 million increases and we have a three-year total of \$60 million to the municipalities. And, Mr. Speaker, I must say that in a matter of fairness, the North — which was completely left out by the Tories — they were cut back in many situations, including municipalities. We didn't see . . . Housing was cut back, sewer and water was cut back; it was nonexistent when the Tories and the right wingers took over.

What we are seeing is an increase here of approximately \$800,000 on a northern revenue-sharing fund. We are now close to \$6 billion, you know, for the communities of the North. And I believe that this is a very, very important aspect of it.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, those are my general comments. But before I move into my more specific comments I wanted to look at some . . . one other aspect that I thought was very, very important. We have, in regards to the social development side, we have been talking about for many years daycare spaces. And I was very pleased, you know, when our government this year made sure that we were dealing with this issue.

And over the next four years, Mr. Speaker, we will have 1,200 new daycare spaces in this province — 500 of this will be this year and I think that's very, very important in regards to the budget. I know that as we look, you know, back into the history and we look back into the . . . to the record, the NDP government has been very strong on this issue. I know what it was like during Tory times because during that time issues such as this were treated in a very negative light.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would speak a few words in Cree on the general aspects of the budget. Mr. Speaker, with due respect to all languages . . .

(15:00)

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Mr. Speaker, as I was doing the overview of the budget in Cree, I made sure that I explained very clearly, you know, what are not only the basis of the budget but the intent and the impact of the budget in the many areas of importance — particularly in health, education, and municipalities, and so on — in relation to the strong partnership with First Nations and also with Métis people and also northerners.

Mr. Speaker, as I looked at the issue, I turn now to the debate on the Sask Party. For me as I looked at the debate on the Sask Party . . . I've been in the House now for over 16 years and I have seen the history during the Grant Devine period, and also the shift when the Saskatchewan Party was a little bit worried about the politics of the Grant Devine PC (Progressive Conservative) Party because of the problems that they had in terms of financial mismanagement, that they would have to change their name. So they changed their name to the Saskatchewan Party. But I'll tell you, it didn't fool the people in the North.

It hasn't fooled a lot of Aboriginal people basically because they've seen the same thing operate at the federal level — the federal level with Jim Pankiw, etc., when the Reform Party

were there. They know their attitude against First Nations and Métis people.

And the reason why they don't get fooled is that because they see a similar sort of pattern happening federally and provincially. Reform Party changed their name to the Canadian Alliance. Did it change who they were? Not very much. They're the still same Reform Party with the right-wing policies. When they did the change from the PC Tories to the Saskatchewan Party, have they made a change? The answer is not very much. It's much the same, the same formula is there.

I heard time and again when Grant Devine was in the House — and I had to watch him and bear him for five years — that he would say exactly the same mantra, that indeed what he would do is cut taxes and spend more. And he was going on and on at that all the time. Pretty soon this province became just about bankrupt. A lot of people had all kinds of words as legalized highway robbery; all kinds of strong words were done during that period in time.

And in many, in many ways we saw that happen because we lost money in the highways program as well. They sold off \$40 million and gave away that much equipment. And in many cases for many years they ruined our highways budget and our highway system.

And I remember them talking about the taxation. They cut off the gasoline tax at that time but I know one thing: they said they promised they would deal with it forever; all of a sudden when they were going in the hole for many years, guess what, he brought back the gasoline tax and then it was even higher than ever.

And when I talk about the taxes this year, from the NDP side we have looked at a sustainable approach on taxation. We have looked at cutting taxes. We knew . . . We cut taxes for a lot of people on personal income. Personal income tax — we've cut over about \$4 million on the taxation side on that over the past three years.

And I think that is very, very important in regards to a lot of our people from the province — our working people, our small businesses, and a lot of our people putting food on the table for their children, and also in regards to buying a lot of the equipment. And I think that's a very, very important aspect. And a lot of the members of across are always very sensitive when I connect Grant Devine, when I connect Grant Devine with the Sask Party; basically because they try and run away from it, they try and hide away from it, but they can't. It stares at them in the face even on their trying times with Grant Schmidt these days.

You know, I heard one of the reasons why a lot of the First Nations and Métis people and northerners don't trust the Saskatchewan Party is that they say one thing but they do another. When they say one thing and they did another, we saw that in very, very clear terms because as I looked back at the — and the Saskatchewan Party members get a little fidgety when I say that — they said that indeed they would support, for example on the question of SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority), you know . . . and this is what the Saskatchewan Party leader said.

He delivered a speech to the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) in February 2002, and I quote:

Hermanson praised the FSIN for running a successful gaming business and complimented it for addressing “governance challenges” at SIGA . . .

It goes on in his speech:

(The Leader of the Opposition said) . . . the financial success of . . . SIGA is one of the great and largely untold business success stories in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, of course they get all excited over there because of their connections to the old Tories. And they like to say that they're not old Tories. Mr. Speaker, just by the reaction out there, I have hit a nerve. Because yet they are always that way. Mr. Speaker, because here it is their leader says one thing in front of the chiefs. He goes in front of the chiefs, he tells them SIGA is great, SIGA is good, then he comes back in the House and he pounces away and tries to destroy the 25-year agreement.

Every single one of the Sask Party members voted against that SIGA agreement. The member from Humboldt, etc., may make good comments on SIGA with individual members out there, but she herself voted against the agreement. And they can't have it both ways. For example, they try and make a few positive comments and a lot of people couldn't trust you. As I looked at the facts over the years, that's exactly what has happened.

And when I looked at the questions that they always raise into Aboriginal and First Nations people, the reason is this, the reason is this, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of positive stuff that's happening with the development. There's Aboriginal people involved in business development. They're involved in educational development.

We have SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) building which the member from Weyburn was tearing down a little while ago, two weeks ago, saying that the money that was put into that building was wasted. And I said to myself, the shame of that member from Weyburn shooting down the work that has been done on the SIFC building, because in that building they were putting a tepee with respect for veterans who died for this country. They died for this country and they were being honoured on the tepee image, and it was part of the initial plan, and they were moving forward with it.

What does the Saskatchewan Party do? They tear it down. They tear down that aspect and that's the reason why, in many cases, First Nations and Métis people simply don't trust what you do.

And as I look back, they look at the different type of agreements. This year, on the First Nations side, we will be dealing with a TLE (Treaty Land Entitlement) Agreement. This year, it'll be \$22.3 million that we will be spending. And over the years, our commitment has been this way. Took us six months to get into government, Mr. Speaker, when we signed the TLE Agreement. And every year we have the budget to spend money on the TLE Agreement, guess who votes against it? The Saskatchewan Party. They're always voting against the

budget that provides money for TLE. Yet when you hear them talk: oh, we're for treaty rights, we're for this, and we're for that. But they vote against that budget every single year on TLE. They can speak and say we support it. On the other hand, their actions speak louder than words. They attack it.

And of course, the member for Maple Creek is talking from his seat and I notice that we were trying to do an approach where it was very, very important on the Great Sand Hills case. They were trying to sound as if they were supporting . . . they were supporting the position of First Nations. All of sudden when the ranchers showed up in the audience, they had a different position. They were supporting now the ranchers. Here we were trying to create a situation where there was a fair process taking place and that's what they were doing, and that's exactly what they were doing. And that's the reason why there is little support out there and little trust out there.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that . . . I believe that as we are moving forward, there's a lot of the debate vis-à-vis on the House on the Sask Party side. I would . . . just looked at one of their major debates as I was on the floor. They were saying that indeed the 6.8 per cent growth would be there. But indeed as I looked about the information, we had excellent information vis-à-vis that response. They were talking about The Conference Board. The Conference Board of Canada said that if we get a normal crop:

I don't think 6.8 per cent economic growth is overly optimistic. It is based on the assumption of a normal crop.

And that was by David Madani from The Conference Board of Canada, Regina *Leader-Post*, March 29, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I am close to the end of my speech so I'll make a couple of comments on the North.

On the North we have some improvements. We've got training spaces — we've got 40 additional training spaces for health and science training for the North. We also have 40 seats in regards to the aspect of nursing training in the North. I heard the members from across saying nothing was happening. That means they don't recognize that people are being trained in the North.

Mr. Speaker, when we took over from the Tories there was about 1,000 people that were being trained. With NDP now in office for 10 years, we have over 2,600 people in post-secondary education in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there was other improvements. We had a \$4.9 million for the water system up in the north country. We also have improvements on the highways. We also had improvements for our libraries up north. I will read a quick quote on that. It says, this boost that they got . . .

And I will quote this from Pakhisimon Nuye?ah Library System:

This boost will inspire them to continue in their efforts to provide excellent library service to their communities.

I just received this letter, Mr. Speaker, and I will be tabling that

for my budget speech.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I look around we are helping the people in the North. I notice that in regards to a small fund — even on history — I notice that there's going to be \$75,000 for the Cumberland House Historic Park upgrades. 1974, my home community — it's very . . . a very historic part of the community. It was the first inland settlement of the Hudson Bay Company, and it is very, very important that with the historic site that's there, there needs to be some upgrading, which we do in other parts of the province as well, Mr. Speaker, but I wanted to mention that.

So as I look back, Mr. Speaker, this year's Throne Speech has been very, very good throughout this province and for the North and our continued partnerships with First Nations and Métis people.

And I would say that the negativism of the Saskatchewan Party, the doom and gloom attitude is not what is part of our government. We firmly believe in our people of this province. We have faith and trust in our people that indeed we will move forward. This budget presents another step forward in this new century.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be moving of course to supporting the motion of the government and going against the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:15)

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to say that it's a pleasure to be on my feet once again in this Assembly to address the most recent document put forward by the government of the day — the recent budget.

When I stood to speak a week or so ago in response to the Speech from the Throne, I didn't realize that I would have an opportunity to once again make an appeal to the people of this House and to the people of the province and my own constituency on some of the areas that I think are significant and very important, and some that were left completely unaddressed in the most recent budget, Mr. Speaker.

I do recall, however, that I didn't take the opportunity when I was addressing the Speech from the Throne to comment about the great people and constituency as a whole of Cypress Hills.

You know, every day that I'm in this legislature I am reminded again of the responsibility that those of us who are elected to represent our various constituencies have in this great Chamber. And I am awed frankly by the level of responsibility that this position, this elected position, has imbued on me personally and on each of us as individuals who represent large constituencies, small constituencies, wonderful places all around this province.

But without any exaggeration, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say the most wonderful place in the province of Saskatchewan is the area of Cypress Hills. There isn't a biased bone in my body when I say that. But I do want to bring to the attention of this House how great the area of Cypress Hills is, how wonderful

the people are, and the great diversity of the region.

I talk to more and more people who say they have visited the area and have been surprisingly impressed. Now I think that's sort of a problem for me because I'm never surprised that they're impressed. But if they're surprised with how impressed they are when they get to Cypress Hills, I think that it's . . . it behooves every person in this province to visit the constituency and find out for themselves why, why Cypress Hills is such an impressive area.

Mr. Speaker, we have the beauty of the hills themselves — an area that is so unique geographically and in many other respects. In terms of flora and fauna I'm told that there is no place like the Cypress Hills anywhere else in North America. If you want to find similar types of species of animals and plants, you may have to go as far as Siberia to find similarities. It's a completely unique area in North America.

And on the north side of the No. 1 we have The Great Sand Hills, an area that has been the subject of quite a bit of controversy lately. There's a lot of very environmentally important sensitivity that needs to be regarded in terms of the Sand Hills but there's also vast riches there.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have the Sand Hills as almost a juxtaposition in its barrenness to the beauty and the grandeur and the lushness of the Cypress Hills. And so within a very short driving distance — 100 miles at the very most — you have, you know, polar ends of the experience in nature in the Cypress Hills.

But one of the most fundamental elements of that constituency, Mr. Speaker, really has to be the people. I don't know that the spirit of independence is alive and well to the extent that it is in the people of the Cypress Hills region.

Now I know that we are a different breed down there. I know that our proximity to the Montana border and the Alberta border and the North Saskatchewan River have created a separation and certainly a different mentality I think in the people of the area.

But nevertheless as independent and as determined as the people of Cypress Hills are to achieve, to thrive, to do more than survive, Mr. Speaker, to really benefit themselves and their communities and their families, they are also committed to this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, as sparsely populated as the Cypress Hills constituency is, there is a disproportionate amount of benefit that accrues to this province through the initiative of the people of Cypress Hills. And I'd like to laud the people for their effort and their deliberate willingness to contribute to the well-being of the province as a whole, at this opportunity today.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move now to some comments in regard to the budget that was presented by the new Finance minister late last week. I just think that it's important to kind of get a grasp on, on sort of what the overall thrust of that budget might be.

I had a title for the Throne Speech. I haven't bothered to title

the budget speech or my response to it. But I listened to it. I read some of the fine print, the details, well, the intricacies of the budget. And it seems to me that this budget has really provided a plethora of options.

Now before members on the government side think that that's a compliment, let me just ask you what you think of this, Mr. Speaker. All of the options that appeared in this budget could be summed up in these few words. It was full of could-dos, would-dos, ought-to-dos, did-dos, might-dos, thinking about dos and won't dos.

Mr. Speaker, there wasn't a lot of substance in this budget. Once you got beyond the commitment of a certain amount of money to health care and a certain amount of money to education, there really wasn't much of substance. There was a complete recitation of all of the things that the government has done and what they might do and, if they ever have the money, they would like to do. But there wasn't a whole lot of substance beyond those two points.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's a sign of good government that they would make . . . in a speech such as the budget speech or the Throne Speech, they would make tough decisions all the while offending the least amount of people. But this budget made no tough decisions and managed to offend a vast cross-section of groups that represented the largest percentage of people in this province.

Let's look at some of the groups that responded almost immediately to the disappointment of the budget.

I would refer first of all, Mr. Speaker, to the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and the mayors of the large cities. What they have said in response to the budget provisions for large cities and the urban communities of our province is well documented. It's on record. In fact, I believe it's on videotape playing on the Web site belonging to the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. They have a very clear voice of response and it's been a negative one, Mr. Speaker.

And so, we have 80 per cent of the people in this province represented by urban municipalities and the government in their budget just kind of stuck a stick in their eye and said, I'm sorry, you're going to have to wait another few years before you're going to get any money from us. And then the government has the temerity to wonder why the big city mayors are offended by their actions.

They didn't put enough money in that budget to assuage any of their concerns. And one thing for certain, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't enough money there, there wasn't enough money there to prevent tax increases to every property tax or property owner in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the big city mayors and the small community mayors are falling further and further behind in terms of the cost of upkeep where it relates to infrastructure, whether it's roads or sewer or water facilities. They are falling further and further behind in terms of service provision to their people.

And if the provincial government is not going to share the

revenues that they so gladly talked about — the increased revenues from oil and gas and sales tax revenues — if they're not willing to share those revenues with the communities of this province, the communities have no choice but to go back to their taxpayers, their property owners and ask them for more money.

And as you know, Mr. Speaker, the mayors have made a very good case of the fact that they're at a breaking point with their citizens on the property tax issue. There is just no more money to be squeezed out of property tax in this province.

And so if the government is somewhat surprised by the response of the big city mayors and of the mayors of the other municipalities, they oughtn't to be because this is something that could have been expected, knowing how tight things have been in the past and how much costs have increased in the last 12 months or the last couple of years.

So, Mr. Speaker, we had SUMA's (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) response and the response of the big city mayors.

Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I need to clarify that. There was one apparently, one big city mayor who decided he could throw his support behind the government budget and that was the mayor of Moose Jaw. Now I wonder why. You know, this government has virtually bought the city of Moose Jaw with various investments in that community over the last couple of years. They own it — lock, stock, and barrel. No wonder the mayor of Moose Jaw is happy with the money that they got in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, SSTA, Mr. Speaker, the SSTA is another group that . . . particularly offended by this particular budget. The SSTA, Mr. Speaker, has been . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Member will be permitted to speak.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that I'd like to quote Shakespeare at this point if I could: methinks the member doth protest too much.

Mr. Speaker, they apparently are unaware of literary licence. Mr. Speaker, they are quite unaware of literary licence — or at least unwilling to give us the opportunity to use literary licence because they are very free with the truth whenever they speak themselves.

And I think that I haven't misspoke myself. I think that anybody with a common shred of understanding would be understanding of the intent of the comment. So I'm not going to retract them.

It is a known fact, Mr. Speaker, that the government of the day has not put enough money into urban governance in this province. And they're going to suffer the consequences of that. I will defer to the wisdom of the people in the next election in

that regard.

Returning to my text, Mr. Speaker, the SSTA didn't have a whole lot of good things to say about the budget either. Because as it turns out, while the increases that go to education will cover some of the incremental costs associated with the teachers' contract, it will not be enough to provide the money necessary to meet the other needs and obligations of the school districts in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there are other people employed by school districts that have had wage increases, that they are . . . that are expecting some kind of increase as a result of their salary negotiations and the contract, and there are added costs associated with running a school district. Well you know, the government talks about how much money they put into education but in reality it will not be enough to meet the needs of the school districts in this province.

So once again they will be required to go back to the taxpayers, the property owners of this province, and they . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the members all to take a deep breath and then open their ears and let's hear what the member for Cypress Hills has to say.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to continue. Mr. Speaker, the SSTA clearly said that the budget was insufficient to meet the needs of their organization and their members around the province. And once again the taxpayer, the property owner in various communities will be the one to carry the burden for this government's budgetary decisions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to go to an editorial that showed up in *The StarPhoenix*, today as a matter of fact. And well I find this very interesting, but the title of this particular editorial is "Critics right to pan budget."

Now we've talked about the SUMA response. We've talked about the SSTA's response. Without reading the whole editorial, I do want to point out here that they do talk about farm groups, business leaders, and research groups at universities. Their refrain was all the same:

Any additional money they received, while sorely needed, fell far short of what's required.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was one area where there was increase in spending, and as is often the case I think it's important to give credit where credit is due. But I want to, I want to point out that not all is well in the increased monies that have gone to health care.

While there are some equipment purchases that are going to be made as a result of this, while there's going to be some increased training opportunities, I notice that one of the areas where the health increases fell short was in the provision of recruitment and retention capabilities for health care professionals. And I think that that is one of the most serious issues facing health care in this province.

We have had members of the health care profession say repeatedly that the roadblocks in health care provision in this province are largely related to the loss of professionals. And I think that until a serious plan is put forward to retrain . . . I'm sorry, to retain, to train, and to provide a good operating experience for health care professionals in this province, we're going to continue having that particular difficulty.

(15:30)

I noticed the news story in last Friday's paper in which, if I might, I want to quote the Minister of Health. I know the minister made this comment in the most sort of non-maligning way he possibly could. I know that it was well intended. But it says here that the minister says that there is no advantage to training more nurses if other provinces can hire them when they graduate.

I know what he meant. I know what the intention of that comment was; I'm certain I do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I guess I'd like to follow that comment through to its logical conclusion because if in fact what the minister was saying was followed logically to the end of the argument, the best position this government could take, that this province could take, was to train no nurses so we wouldn't lose any nurses. I think that that's where the government's vision of the way to run this province and our vision of how this province ought to be run differs.

Mr. Speaker, we have a campaign going on right now that says we have a wide open future. We have not just a wide open future, we have tremendous need in this province. And if we're not going to address the need at the most critical point, it doesn't really matter what else we do around the edges. The problems will remain.

I think that the training of nurses is not less important because we're losing them; the training of nurses becomes more important because we're losing so many of them. But not only does the training become more important, so does the absolute necessity of creating an environment in this province where nurses want to stay here and work.

And to that end I would ask that maybe the Minister of Health, maybe his government would sit down with the unions in this province, the health care professionals, and the health districts, to work out a process, a procedure, a plan whereby newly graduating nursing students can get full-time employment in Saskatchewan.

One of the things I hear repeatedly is that when nurses graduate from their degree programs and try to find work in Saskatchewan, all they're offered is part-time work. And I think that that's one of the reasons why we lose so many of our nursing students. Our graduates are looking for full-time work. They want to put the skills that they've acquired after four or five years of training to the best use, and getting a part-time position is not the way they're going to get the best experience.

And if you have an option as a newly minted graduate to go to a community or a province or a state or some foreign jurisdiction where you can get a full-time job and use all the skills you've been taught over the previous three or four or five years, you're

going to take that opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You're not going to stay in Saskatchewan and work at a part-time position just because you like it here, just because your family's here. We need to be competitive in that regard and until we are, I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to continue losing these newly minted grads.

One of the other things I do know is that retirement is likely to create a nursing shortage of roughly 600 to 650 individuals a year in the near future. And if we don't increase our training seats for nurses, not only are we going to lose, not only are we going to lose those young people who prefer to go elsewhere or are forced to go elsewhere, we're going to lose big time because we won't have the people to replace all of the early retirements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the problems with this budget, I felt, was the very optimistic growth projection of 6.8 per cent in the GDP (gross domestic product). And, Mr. Speaker, I know that there might be some economic model somewhere that the Minister of Finance and his colleagues could drag out to say this is entirely possible. I assume that at some point or other it has happened in the past.

But I noticed that the government has hinged a lot of its excuses for its financial performance and its future financial performance on one issue, and that is the impact of drought in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to go to the, if you're going to go to the farm problem as the excuse you need to have to justify your financial shenanigans, maybe you could use a farm analogy to justify or to deal with this whole thing. I've been around rural people and farmers just long enough to know that they say, anybody who's going to grow a crop will say, you never lose a crop in February; you never lose a crop in March; you probably never lose a crop in April. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, neither do those prudent farmers ever sell their entire crop before it's in the bin.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this particular Finance minister has not only assured us that he's going to see an average or a better than average crop grow, he's also based his entire financial predictions on selling the crop before it's even come out of the ground.

That is not very prudent, Mr. Speaker, and I think that the minister is really erring on the side of extreme optimism — not just a little bit of optimism, but extreme optimism. And it's not . . . It's imprudent, frankly, for him to make that kind of a jump.

Mr. Speaker, there many, many other areas where I would like to go on this budget debate, but I think in the interests of time I will conclude my comments by saying that I'm going to be supporting the amendment because I don't feel that this budget provides the blueprint for this province that we really need.

You know one last comment about the future wide open campaign. You know as I drive from my constituency to Regina, I drive quite an area. If I drive from my office to the north end of my constituency, I drive quite an area. It's a vast, open area. The future is wide open in the Cypress Hills. The future is wide open but the people have left.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is an auction house based in Medicine Hat who conducts most of the farm auctions in my constituency. I'm told that they have so many farm auctions from among the people of Cypress Hills that they quit taking dates because they could not accommodate any more sales.

Not only is our future wide open in Cypress Hills, it's unpopulated, it's empty. And I'm looking forward to the day when we have a government in place, when we have a budget in place, when we have a plan in place that will not just stop the out-migration from my constituency but will actually see people wanting to move back into that area and take up productive farming and ranching activities and business activities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment and voting against the budget. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Community Resources and Employment I am pleased to take part in the debate on this, the 2003-04 budget, our government's 10th consecutive balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, in this year's provincial budget, approximately \$606 million is allocated to the newly structured and newly named Department of Community Resources and Employment. And as part of the restructuring that occurred with the addition of career and employment services and the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to the former Department of Social Services, a new vision was created for the department.

And that vision is this, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people regardless of differences in needs or circumstances have the opportunity to contribute and be included in the economic and social life of the province. And that vision tells us that the department's role is to focus our efforts on helping individuals and families address issues which affect their ability to fully participate in the economy and social aspects of life within their communities and the province.

It directs us to shift our efforts from constantly responding to crises to working with our clients to help them develop long-term solutions to the issues they face. And we do that because we know that healthy families and communities are the building blocks of a healthy and vibrant society.

That vision also sets two new goals for our department, Mr. Speaker. The first is economic independence and self-reliance. Mr. Speaker, in my conversations with social assistance clients, I've never had one tell me that they wanted to stay on welfare. What they tell me they want, Mr. Speaker, is to be independent, to support themselves and their families by working, to live with dignity. But many of them also tell me that they need some help to make the often-challenging transition from welfare to work, and we have provided that help.

Through the Building Independence program and our career and employment services program, we're helping literally thousands of people including Employment Insurance clients enter or return to the workforce. As a result, Mr. Speaker, more than 5,700 people participated in the Jobs First program in 2002, its first full year of operation. And as a result of our Building

Independence initiatives, more than 6,000 families with children have moved from welfare to the workforce.

As more and more families move from social assistance to the workplace, they can, like all low-income working families in Saskatchewan, take advantage of the Saskatchewan employment supplement. Mr. Speaker, in 2002, an average of 7,900 low-income working families in this province received a Saskatchewan employment supplement benefit each month to help them with the child-related or other costs of going to work.

And in the first year, as a part of my department, career and employment services across the province provided services to more than 24,000 Saskatchewan people. In partnership with over 535 organizations, including employers, career and employment services delivered employment programs to more than 1,600 individuals and communities across Saskatchewan, with fully two-thirds of those participating finding employment or going on to further education or training.

Mr. Speaker, simply put, Saskatchewan people want to work. They're proud and fiercely independent. They want to work and they want to become economically independent.

But they have things to tell us and by listening we've learned that there are two areas which can present challenges as they strive for that economic independence. Those two areas, Mr. Speaker, are: one, adequate and affordable housing; and two, quality accessible child care.

I'm pleased to say that for the 2003-04 budget year, along with the federal and municipal governments, the budget for the Department of Community Resources and Employment provides \$40 million to construct 1,400 affordable housing units over the next four years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, conditional commitments will be made to CBOs (community-based organization) for construction of over 400 new homes in 2003-04 at a public cost of \$12 million. Because of the high need for housing in the northern part of our province, at least \$3 million from the federal government and \$3 million from the province will be specifically allocated for northern housing needs. This translates to new affordable housing for approximately 116 northern families, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, a second challenge to employment for many people is the availability of quality child care. Last week I announced to this House the largest investment in child care in the history of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, over the next four years, child care Saskatchewan will make 1,200 new child care spaces available to Saskatchewan families — 1,200 new spaces, Mr. Speaker. And because children are a priority of this government — indeed they are the future of this province — we added an additional \$2.2 million to the 800,000 provided by the federal government for 2003-04.

Mr. Speaker, this means we will be developing, providing early childhood services grant funding for 500 new child care spaces this year, in addition to 250 currently existing spaces that were not receiving the grant but will, Mr. Speaker, starting today.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the appreciation and the recognition of the significance of the commitment we made, in the letter . . . an e-mail sent by the Saskatchewan Early Child Care Directors Association last Thursday to the Premier, and in which the statement was made, and I quote:

. . . I am celebrating what your gov't is (going to be) doing for the children of Saskatchewan. Your gov't has 'dared to care'.

Mr. Speaker, affordable housing and child care — these are just two ways that Saskatchewan supports working families. The Saskatchewan child benefit, family health benefits, the employment supplement, and the only universal child tax credit in the country — Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that, the only universal child tax credit in the country — Mr. Speaker, all of these support working families and children.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we're moving away from our traditional social services role. When people approach the department, we sit down with them to identify the kinds of support and assistance they need and then do our best to respond accordingly. And when they get on their feet, Mr. Speaker, we take a step back as they move toward economic and social independence.

Mr. Speaker, our strategy is working. Fewer children are living in poverty and our social assistance caseloads continue their steady, year-over-year decline, having now dropped year, after year, after year — for eight consecutive years.

Mr. Speaker, the number of people working in Saskatchewan in 2002 was the second highest on record. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that since introducing the Building Independence program in 1998, most importantly there are 13,000 fewer kids growing up on welfare in Saskatchewan today.

(15:45)

Mr. Speaker, the second goal for the Department of Community Resources and Employment is inclusion in families and communities. In addition, providing access to high quality support systems that address the needs of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens and their families is a priority for this government.

Saskatchewan's Kids First program targets . . . it targets . . . it services primarily to low-income neighbourhoods and communities and involves partnerships with the Aboriginal community health districts, school boards, and others. In 2002-03, the Kids First program provided services to 447 families.

For 2003-04, Kids First will receive total funding in the amount of \$11.3 million of which 9.8 million will go to targeted communities. As evidence of the joint federal-provincial commitment to vulnerable children, this represents an

incredible 45 per cent increase over last year's budget.

And part of this funding will be used to develop 80 child care spaces for children participating in the Kids First program. These spaces are in addition to the 500 child care spaces I've already talked about. Mr. Speaker, this new funding will allow us to double the number of families participating in the Kids First program in 2003-04.

Mr. Speaker, amendments to The Child and Family Services Act will make kinship care or care by a member of a child's extended family the option of choice, where a child's safety and well-being are at risk and he or she must be removed from the home. These amendments also require the province to support the kinship care including providing financial support. I want to assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that no child will be placed in a situation which presents a risk to the child's safety.

But, Mr. Speaker, our streets can pose a serious risk to a child or young person's safety and well-being. As I've said repeatedly, the sexual abuse and exploitation of our children on the streets of our cities is child abuse, pure and simple, and it will not be tolerated. We have undertaken many initiatives over the past few years and particularly last year to address this reprehensible situation, one of which was a safe house in Saskatoon as a response.

Mr. Speaker, our community partners and in particular our First Nations and Métis partners felt it was essential to develop a safe house in Regina as well. Mr. Speaker, we have developed a very strong partnership with the FSIN to make the development of a Regina safe house for sexually exploited children and youth a reality. A well respected First Nations agency will deliver the safe house program in Regina and, Mr. Speaker, Treaty Four Urban Services anticipates that the Regina safe house will open in June of this year.

Mr. Speaker, this is one more way our government is working on behalf of Saskatchewan children and youth. It is part of our strategy to keep our children safe.

Mr. Speaker, the disability action plan developed by the Saskatchewan Council on Disability Issues emphasizes full citizenship for people with disabilities — a goal shared by our government and reflected in our strategic plan for the Department of Community Resources and Employment.

I'm pleased to say that in response to the council's recommendations, Mr. Speaker, the Community Resources and Employment budget will provide over 4 million new dollars in supports and assistance for persons with disabilities. Across government nearly \$6 million has been allocated to addressing issues raised by the disability community in addition to amounts spent in the previous budget.

Mr. Speaker, people with disabilities who are able to work, want to work. And if there's anything that has been made clear to me since I've come to this portfolio, it has been that fact. Therefore, of the department's \$4 million in . . . 4 million new dollars for 2003-04, \$1.85 million will be directed to providing individualized, flexible employment supports to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities to help address barriers to mainstream employment.

In addition, \$1 million will allow my department's community living division to address increased demand for services to enable people with disabilities to remain in the community.

Mr. Speaker, a further \$1 million will be provided for an increase of \$10 in the monthly disability allowance for people with disabilities who are on social assistance.

And, Mr. Speaker, \$300,000 will be targeted to support to mainstream employers to enable them to accommodate employees with disabilities.

The disability community has identified the loss of health benefits as a major barrier to leaving social assistance. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will extend health coverage for the first year to persons with disabilities who leave social assistance in order to enter the labour force.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge the important news release put out by the Saskatchewan Voice of People with Disabilities on Friday, on budget day, entitled, "Good news budget for people with disabilities." And in referring to the Voice's news release, Mr. Speaker, if I could just quote a couple of . . . a couple of sentences. In the lead sentence the Voice says this:

The Government of Saskatchewan is to be commended for its commitment to advancing the full citizenship of people with disabilities in Saskatchewan.

And they go on in their news release, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge another item I've not yet referred to. And they say, and I quote:

The Voice would also like to congratulate the government in recognizing the need for additional money for Special-Needs Transit in the province by infusing an additional \$715,000 to replace 12 Paratransit vehicles in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it means a great deal to me that those who are the voice for people with disabilities in our province have labelled this as a "Good news budget for people with disabilities."

Now, Mr. Speaker, last week our Premier talked about the vision of our government. A vision of a province filled with opportunities — opportunities for anyone prepared to dream big and plan well and work hard. A vision of a healthy and growing economy which includes all, all Saskatchewan people. My department shares that vision, Mr. Speaker, as I believe do most Saskatchewan people.

I believe we're on the right track and moving in the right direction and we're on a bit of a roll. Saskatchewan people are looking forward to and building for the future. A future which includes everyone — "A Future Wide Open."

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of this well-balanced budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr.

Deputy Speaker, I have a lot of admiration for the member from Moose Jaw North as an orator. I find he is very eloquent and by some fate of the gods, this is the second time I have had to follow him in the House. And as a fairly new member, it's possible that I would be somewhat intimidated. I think he is one of the best speakers that this Assembly has.

But fortunately, Mr. Speaker, I was comforted by the fact that he would be speaking on fiscal matters. And as the content of his speech would be largely nonsensical, that intimidation was able to fade away.

It's clear, Mr. Speaker — after Friday — that it's budgets as well as Baghdad that coalitions can bomb. This budget was based on fantasy, primarily on two fronts; first, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and second, the growth production predicted at 6.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, since this unelected Premier has assumed the reins, the debt has risen by \$1 million a day — \$1 million a day, Mr. Speaker. This is a debt that I will have to pay and my children will have to pay.

It's this government's position, Mr. Speaker, to blame the entirety of this province's debt on a Premier who was elected when myself and the member from Elphinstone were in the fourth grade. This is how out of touch this Premier is with fiscal reality.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, he appointed a physician to the ministry of Finance in hoping that he could doctor the books. Well, Mr. Speaker, mission accomplished — except for two small problems. One is the additional half a billion dollars added to the provincial debt and the other problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the people of Saskatchewan. That's right, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are not misled by fancy haircuts, budget doctoring, or the unelected million dollar man.

When revenues exceed expenditures you have a deficit. No imaginary fund removes these facts. When you run a business and spend more than you take in, you have losses regardless of whether you utilize a credit line or not. This government, this government, Mr. Speaker, will spend more than it takes in — that is deficit. There is nothing . . . there is no other word for it.

I do not trust doctoring with the budget, Mr. Speaker, not from a former political leader who presided over a party that he led hundreds of thousands of dollars into debt.

The debt is now higher than when the NDP administration took office in 1991. The problem here, Mr. Speaker, this is a deficit budget. The debt is rising by the tune of half a billion dollars. It's shameful. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

There is no way anyone in the world can justify saying it is a balanced budget because we used a fund that had no money in it. This is like me at the end of the year, Mr. Speaker, going to the banker and saying, I only grew this much grain, I spent this much money, but I paid all my bills because I've got a line of credit. And the banker, they won't buy that. I'm sure the bankers in New York won't buy that. It's a fallacy.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker — and this is even, this is even

more disturbing — is the fallacy of this budget with its prediction of 6.8 per cent growth in GDP. This growth rate is farcical. It's construed only to hide the true nature of the massive, massive debt.

What does 6.8 per cent growth really mean? It means and it presupposes growth in the agricultural section . . . sector. And although the agricultural sector is currently pegged at only 23 per cent of GDP, this number is derived from the government's determination that every 10 per cent reduction on average crop will affect the GDP negatively by 2.3 per cent.

This does beg the question of what type of growth does the government expect from agriculture when it is only 33 per cent of the GDP? Further, how is this to be fostered, Mr. Speaker, when the province announces a \$40 million cut to Sask Ag and Food?

Mr. Speaker, these numbers just don't add up. For 33 per cent of the economy to bolster the economy to a rate of 6.8 per cent of GDP growth means realized growth in the agricultural sector has to be in the neighbourhood of around 16 per cent.

And although the Finance minister misquoted a number of Canadian banking institutions — as none of them, Mr. Speaker, none of them claimed Saskatchewan's growth rate would even near 6.8 per cent — I can tell you unequivocally there is not a bank in Saskatchewan, there is not a credit union, there is not a bookie, there is not a grandfather that would lend money to a farmer based on a 16 per cent growth production. This is a pure fallacy and it's an insult to the farmers of this province.

And it's an insult — it's an insult; it's an insult — to all the members of this House that this would be portrayed as what the actual growth is going to be.

The member opposite says it's happened before because . . . and the assumption here is that there's been shrinking for two years in the sector and suddenly it's going to rebound to average to above average and this is going to make up the growth. There is not a financial institution in this country that is predicting 16 per cent growth in the ag sector in Saskatchewan.

Your government has based its numbers on pure magic. That is a fallacy. It is not going to happen.

Commodity prices are currently falling, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt, there is no . . . the PROs (Pool return outlook), the PROs in wheat, Mr. Speaker, are going down; the PROs in peas are going down; the PROs in mustard are going down. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite don't hire some pros to actually work these out or take seriously the predictions from senior economists at the banks.

They quoted, they misquoted the banks a number of time. There will be some growth but it is not going to come close to the 16 per cent required to grow up the GDP to 6.8 per cent. The budget is doctored, Mr. Speaker. It is unrealistic.

Here's another thing. This government expects that 6.8 per cent growth to be achieved on the backs of the petrol industry.

I'll explain something with regards to new drilling, Mr.

Speaker. Fourth quarter drilling by the oil and gas companies may not sustain their present rate due to the falling gas and oil prices. The fourth quarter drilling that we saw last year was in part propelled by high petrol prices which — in the summertime — which pushed up earnings and profit-takings in the third quarter.

It followed from that, as there were still earnings in the third quarter, meant there was more money left over that was put into exploration for fourth quarters for the oil companies to balance off their books. That's why we saw a great gain, especially in the gas industry, in new wells, many of them throughout the Kindersley region.

There is no reason to think that this is going to be sustained, Mr. Speaker. One of the main reasons for this is that Operation Iraqi Freedom, and its inevitable, just, swift, and victorious conclusion will see the stabilization of oil prices and hence, a slowing of new drilling in our province. It will slow down. New drilling will slow.

The government applauds itself on reducing the royalties and this it credits in part for new drilling. And this is probably true, Mr. Speaker, but what a concept. After years of having the highest royalty rates in North America, we're seeing a cut and we're seeing some increase in drilling.

(16:00)

And this begs the question, Mr. Speaker, how well would the rest of the economy do if the NDP were out of the henhouse and the market didn't have to fear the socialist fox? It's tragic, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta has a Heritage Fund. While Wilbert Aberhart realized the oil wasn't better off left in the ground, whereas Tommy the commie set our province backwards 50 years because . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Would members please come to order and ensure that the language is parliamentary.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . because he thought the oil was better off left in the ground.

And what do we have now? We have the longest surgical waiting list in this country.

Mr. Speaker, our province is blessed with more natural resources than any province in this country.

And socialism in the past 50 and 60 years has left our population stagnant, has left us in a have-not-province situation and that's an embarrassment for the people of Saskatchewan, an embarrassment for Canada. And after the next election that's going to change, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see things grow.

Our economy is constantly hampered by the intervention of our Crown corporations into the private sector. The government claims that the Crowns pay massive dividends to the province every year. What they fail to mention, Mr. Speaker, is that as Crowns they pay no income tax, they pay no PST (provincial sales tax), the dividends they pay are not based on after-tax net income. And this fact inhibits our economy.

No successful jurisdiction in the world, Mr. Speaker, has this level of intervention by their governments into the private sector. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because in a market economy, supply and demand affect the price of goods. When you have government intervention you're affecting not only the supply but the demand as well. It is a big monkey wrench into the way that the market functions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a problem that has existed in Saskatchewan and it continues to exist under this present administration.

It's also, Mr. Speaker, the fact that no other, no other jurisdiction in the world has this much government intervention in their economies and are successful. This is the reason, Mr. Speaker, that *The Economist* magazine calls the highest growth for the top industrial countries in the world as Australia peaking at 4.1 per cent for the coming year. But somehow Saskatchewan will top out at 6.8 per cent.

There's no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, must be worried that he'll be replaced by a Saskatchewan physician, as he can outproduce the US (United States) economy by more than two times over.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, as well, is that in March 2004 we may be pleased to see the debt increase by only half a billion dollars. If the GDP grows only by 3 per cent, it will mean an addition of another \$250 million to our provincial debt. This would entail an increase of \$750 million — three-quarters of a billion dollars — to the overall debt for the year 2003-2004. Such a situation, Mr. Speaker, with a million-dollars-a-day-debt Premier extrapolated over another term would leave Saskatchewan with the worst debt to GDP ratio in Canada.

A long story short, Mr. Speaker, the current path is unsustainable. There is zero credibility. This is the third fudged budget using a fund which doesn't exist to try and balance off the books.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will not tolerate this. An election will remedy the situation and put us back on the long overdue path to prosperity.

One of the things that's coming out of this, Mr. Speaker, is the need for summary financial statements. This is something the Saskatchewan Party and the member for Canora-Pelly has been calling for, for quite some time.

What the Finance minister failed to note in his address to this Legislative Assembly on Friday was the chartered accountants' association of Canada has made this a mandatory move. It was not the intent of this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to move to summary financial statements. Their hand has been forced.

And what this means is this is going to be the last smoke and mirrors budget that we're going to see where red ink is claimed as black. It won't happen in the future, Mr. Speaker. We're going to have summary financial statements and we're going to see how much money the Crowns have borrowed. We're going to see once and for all that revenues are less than expenditures. And that, Mr. Speaker, in the whole picture of things is going to demonstrate that that is a deficit budget.

The final thing I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker, has to do with, again, government intervention in the private sector with regards to the Crown corporations.

I had . . . A local newspaper ran an article, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about SaskTel's venture into cable television. More or less, Mr. Speaker, what they were able to conclude with the number of dollars spent on this project and the number of subscribers that had signed up for this new cable television package, which was around 4,000, that it was around \$5,000 spent per subscription.

Well it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that that's probably about the price of a big screen TV and somehow I missed — and I know that SaskTel is never short on their expenditures for advertising — when the free big screen TV giveaway was, Mr. Speaker.

Because spending \$5,000 per subscription for something which already exists in the private sector and very well, I might add, also in the satellite capacity as many rural subscribers use, this was a complete waste of government money. It was a complete waste of SaskTel resources, specifically, Mr. Speaker, when we have large holes in the cell coverage in my area. And it really could be used for something better.

And everything being said and done, Mr. Speaker, this will continue to scare off private enterprise coming into the province and finding that they've got to compete against the company that uses taxpayers' money, against the company that pays no taxes, against the company that pays no provincial PST. They're not even forced to pay local taxes. Instead they pay grants in lieu and often these don't match up to what local taxation would be.

Mr. Speaker, this needs to change. We need new direction. We need growth. This is not a budget about growth. It claims 6.8 per cent, but that is farcical. And secondly we're dealing with the 17th consecutive quarter now of population loss.

Mr. Speaker, for real economic growth to occur we do need further tax cuts to spur the economy forward. This is the only factor that has a proven track record in other jurisdictions of raising population. By increasing the population base we will expand our tax base which will allow us to pay for the services all of us dearly want. Instead of having two and a half year waiting list for hip surgery, as members of my constituency have, we could get those numbers down. We are not going to be able to do that with this interventionist, central planning economic approach that the government has been taking.

To expand the economy the only proven method is tax cuts, Mr. Speaker. And these tax cuts have to be fair and they have to be targeted. This is the kind of growth that the Saskatchewan Party will be producing.

And we will not only see this growth correlate into population growth of 100,000 people over the next 10 years, those 100,000 people, Mr. Speaker, are not going to be only in Saskatoon and Regina. They're going to be in Major, Saskatchewan, in Eston, Saskatchewan, in Eaton, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I will cease now. I will be voting in favour of the amendment. I will be voting against the budget. And I thank

you for your time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank my colleagues for that welcome. Mr. Speaker, budget debates are fairly predictable. The government says we essentially got it right, and the opposition essentially says we got it wrong.

But, Mr. Speaker, one thing I noted from the previous speaker that we agree on, the right wing says — and they've said for 50 years now — Tommy did it, Tommy did it. That's what they say, Tommy did it. And the left wingers say, with a great deal of pride, Tommy did it. So we're in agreement. Tommy did many, many things — great things we say; right wingers say something different. And this defines sort of where we're at.

But budget speeches, government essentially says we're on the right track; opposition essentially says we're not. And budgets, Mr. Speaker, are really all about choices.

So I was thinking about this particular budget and this particular debate and how I might help my constituents or my friends or my family or even myself to understand, is it good or is it bad. Because at the end of the day that's what we have to decide. Is it a good budget? Does it represent my values, my interests, my constituents' interests, or does it not?

So I started looking at what is our one area that we're the proudest of and have consistently been proud of, both CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and New Democrats? And the answer of course, Mr. Speaker, is health care. Health care is the one, the keynote area that defines us from them. We believe in a publicly funded, publicly accessible health system that's equally accessible to everyone.

Mr. Speaker, in health this year's budget is \$284 million higher than it was last year — \$284 million higher. The biggest policy concern of most of our constituents . . . and I venture to . . . I dare say members of the opposition as well as members of the government, the biggest single concern that they've identified day after day, month after month, year after year, is health care, Mr. Speaker — health care.

What's our response? We are working every day in every way to make health care as good as it can be possibly be. And I can see 284 million reasons why health care is going to be better next year or this year that we're in than it was last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, Regina Coronation Park, my constituency, has a fairly significant number of students, many of them in the K to 12 area. But we also, this being a university city with the University of Regina and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) with Wascana Campus, we have a fair number of post-secondary students as well.

And it would come as no surprise that in the working north end of the city, young or middle-aged families, that many of us have children that are attending post-secondary. I'm probably . . .

Our household is probably a little bit over-represented in that this year there's three family and household members that will qualify for the income tax credit that kicks in, Mr. Speaker, as they file this year's income tax, and it's \$350 per student that graduates this year. And I can tell you, in our household, that's a pretty darn welcome amount if you do the math — three times \$350.

Mr. Speaker, this, I want to point out, is available to students that graduate, but it's available to students that earn their income in Saskatchewan. It's available to students who choose to take advantage of the millions of opportunities that we have right here in this wonderful province that we have. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to say that there's many, many thousands of students that are starting to benefit from this \$350 tax credit program this year and that will . . . There's many, many more thousands of students that will graduate in coming years, next year, and beyond that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm real proud of what we're doing for young people, right here, in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, in this budget we've also done an extension for the student loan program. You can earn scholarship exemption money. It used to be you could earn \$600. We've tripled that. It's now \$1,800 that you can earn in scholarships before it affects your student loan. Mr. Speaker, that's a huge benefit to students, post-secondary students, right here in Saskatchewan.

(16:15)

We've also increased the earning exemption before it kicks into student loans. It used to be that you were exempt for the first \$600 that you earn. That's now been increased, nearly tripled. It's \$1,700 that a student can earn and keep. This is 1,200 more of their own resources, \$1,200 more that each post-secondary student is capable of having without it affecting their student loan in any way, shape, or form, Mr. Speaker. This is a real support.

And it, combined with . . . We've got \$66 million available for student loans this year — 66 million, big number. But get this, Mr. Speaker. Over half of it, more than 33 million of that \$66 million, is available in bursaries and in forgiveness of student loans. The net result, Mr. Speaker, is at the end of the day, right here in Saskatchewan, our post-secondary students will graduate and will enjoy amongst the lowest student debt of any students in any province in this great country of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is leading the way in post-secondary education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I've talked a bit about health. I've talked a little bit about education and how this affects us all. Health concerns us all. Education, at one point or another, affects us all.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go to the other end of the spectrum

now — young, young, very young people. Mr. Speaker, we've added \$1.8 million in this budget. We're creating 500 new daycare spaces this year alone, Mr. Speaker — 500 new daycare spaces. I couldn't be prouder of this government's record.

In fact, there's a widely quoted e-mail that we all have access to and I have it in my pile of paper here. But we got a very nice e-mail thank you from someone who works in the daycare industry, thanking — it was directed at the Premier — thanking him for leading a government that, I quote, “dares to care.”

Mr. Speaker, we dare to care and we've acted and we've got 1.8 million reasons why people with children should be very pleased — 500 more daycare spaces is most, most welcome.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget I've heard some concern about agriculture and of course there is concern all around with the state of us coming off our second year of drought. I want to point out a couple of things that for me I'm quite proud of.

We have a Crown corporation, Crop Insurance, that, Mr. Speaker, have had two years of either . . . I think this year was record expenditure, if I can describe it that way, and last year wasn't very far behind. The turnaround has been, has been close to three-quarters of \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker.

Crop Insurance started off this year with over \$280 million accumulated surplus because it goes over years to year. Today it's got a little over a half a billion or \$500 million debt — that's in one year. And that's debt that shows up on the Minister of Finance's total debt books. This is part of the money, Mr. Speaker, that naysayers can say, well you're driving the debt up. Well yes, and you know I don't think we apologize for standing behind our farmers in an incredibly dry year. We're very proud of that.

I contrast that, Mr. Speaker, with what the opposition say they will do if they form government, and they're very bold and proud of this. They say they're going to eliminate Crown corporations. Eliminate it — imagine. I just described a process that got hundreds and hundreds . . . well, about 7, \$800 million into farmers' pockets this year. And the opposition say, oh well, we'd throw that Crown corporation away; we'd get rid of that. Mr. Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me, it never ceases to amaze me what will come out there.

Mr. Speaker, there's one other thing that I just have to comment on while I'm on Crowns and this is SaskTel which, of course, we've taken dividends in from SaskTel over the years. It's been a great Crown corporation. It's provided just tremendous service to Saskatchewan people. We've got the highest level of service . . . like more . . . a higher portion of our province, of our population, is served by telephone than . . . percentage-wise, than any other province in Canada.

Notwithstanding this, notwithstanding the terrific job that SaskTel does and the opposition's cries that what we need is to get the Crown corporations out of the way of private firms, notwithstanding that, I have noted a number of opposition members that have been crying about SaskTel cellular coverage doesn't cover 100 per cent of their constituency.

Well, Mr. Speaker, isn't it interesting because we've had

telephone competition in Saskatchewan for a number of years now. There's not one thing preventing any of those private companies from putting up a cell tower anywhere they want; not one thing preventing their private companies from providing that cell coverage except . . . I will say it, there is one thing, Mr. Speaker. The private telcos have always operated in Saskatchewan where they say, you pay, SaskTel, you pay, you put in the infrastructure and we'll bleed off the profits. That's what the privates say.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan are wise to that trick. And it's shown by the high portion of people that are supporting SaskTel as opposed to any of the private options that there are.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoke about some of the things this budget does for my constituents, for my friends, for my family. Something I've . . . I did not mention yet is the twinning of the highways, the . . . where we're going to have the Yellowhead and the Trans-Canada Highway all done, border to border, all done by 2007. That is bouncing it ahead of the schedule as it was and I'm proud of that. I am somewhat distressed that it took as long as it has to get it done.

But I want to remind people, particularly opposition members, that it was not this government but the forerunner of this government that got elected — the right-wing government that got elected, the Grant Devine government got elected — promising that they were going to twin No. 1 Highway. And it didn't happen. The job was left for us to finish it. And I'm very, very pleased that we've been able, despite the fiscal handcuffs that that government left the people of Saskatchewan, we've been able to get to the point where we can actually see that light at the end of the tunnel, Mr. Speaker, and we can almost taste the final layer of pavement going on those highways.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I want to briefly mention that I'm very pleased about a new program that was announced in this year's budget and it's one that deals with jobs for people with disabilities. This is an area, Mr. Speaker, that I have wanted us to move quicker on for many years now, and I see some really terrific steps being taken in this year's budget. And there's summer internships for programs . . . for students, graduates, students with disabilities. And there's more. It's on-line. It's just . . . I'm very proud of those first steps that we're taking in that this year.

Mr. Speaker, I'm about to take my place. I just want to wrap up by . . . sort of where I came in. The left-wingers on this side, the right wingers on that side, have some agreement that . . . we have some agreement that Tommy did it. Mr. Speaker, we agree. Tommy electrified Saskatchewan. Tommy and successive governments have really helped build this province. We've got Crown corporations going, we've got Highway department that we're very proud of, we've got a civil service that's professional and that we're intensely proud of the job that they do day after day.

Mr. Speaker, you contrast that with what the opposition want to do. They want to cut and slash the civil service. They want to take over the justice system. They want to eliminate the Crowns. They want to drive us into the depths of despair, the very despair that we inherited — if I can describe it that way —

in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, isn't it amazing. Isn't it amazing. Every time the right wingers get into power, they say, well government doesn't work. And they get elected. They get elected and then they prove that government doesn't work. When they get the place, the province in enough of a mess, Mr. Speaker, we have an election. Socialists get back into power and we're charged with cleaning up their mess.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that we've cleaned up the mess but there's very, very much more we can do. I am intensely proud of this budget and the many steps forward it's taken. I will be voting against the amendment and proudly voting for this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting listening to the previous member. And he's got it right. The left-wing element has taken over in the province of Saskatchewan. And we've seen it over the last year and a half, two years in fact, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting listening to the members opposite and all the platitudes they're trying to lay before the people of Saskatchewan, trying to dig themselves out of the hole that they continually finding themselves falling into and actually crumbling around them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just make a few comments first of all regarding the constituency of Moosomin, and the budget that was just presented to us just a few short days ago by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, people in the constituency of Moosomin — right across the constituency — were certainly following this budgetary process. I know that municipal councillors through SUMA, through SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), they heard the Premier, and they heard the minister responsible for Municipal Government make presentations, and suggesting that they should wait for the budgetary address and there'd be some very good news for them in this budget.

However, Mr. Speaker, what we've seen is each and every one of them . . . and in fact we saw it last Friday morning. There was a real letdown in the municipal government across the province — and not just municipal government, but boards of education as well.

And why would I say there was a letdown, Mr. Speaker? Because these levels of government have had an off-load placed on their shoulders over the past 10, 11 years in the province of Saskatchewan that they've been asked to carry. And they've been asked to provide the services and to maintain the facilities in their communities. And they've been finding that the weight of the off-load on their backs, which they've had to pass on to the property tax payer, is something that they're not prepared to bear any more.

And so they were waiting with bated breath for the announcements that the Minister of Finance would have for

them. And, Mr. Speaker, the \$10 million that was offered certainly didn't come close to meeting the needs that these local governments have. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, either local governments are going to have to cut services more or else we're going to see mill rates increase.

And that's one of the major concerns that people across the constituency of Moosomin have, and I'm certain across this province have as they look at their local governments and the services, and they look at their property . . . look where the property taxes are today and wonder where they'll be tomorrow.

In fact, both major cities are presently in major budget debate in their councils to try and address how they're going to continue to provide these services.

(16:30)

Mr. Speaker, we look at the constituency of Moosomin and certainly highways has been a priority issue in that constituency for the past number of years. And while we want to acknowledge that there have been some improvements that have been taking place — certainly No. 8 Highway south of Moosomin down to No. 48 — we want to . . . (inaudible) . . . the constituents in that area and people who travel No. 8 in that area are certainly pleased to see that we finally had . . . the improvements have been made. And this year I believe the final surfacing of that stretch of highway will be completed, creating a nice tributary from the southern end of the constituency up to No. 1 Highway.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are issues related to highways that need to be addressed and we need a long-term plan and strategy in order to address these needs. And we're pleased to hear that twinning of No. 1 is going to continue and this year we will see grading of No. 1 right through to the community of Grenfell, and paving of what was done last year.

And, Mr. Speaker, to see that there is finally a commitment . . . And I must add that it's about time the federal government actually put some money into the highway projects in this province as, when we look at the level of tax dollars that leave the province of Saskatchewan as a result of federal taxes on fuel, on gasoline, and the fact that we receive a pittance in return, so the \$82 million that was announced just recently by the Prime Minister was certainly welcome news and it enhances the completion of the twinning of No. 1 and the Yellowhead much more quickly.

It was something, Mr. Speaker, which I might add, was a part of the Saskatchewan Party election platform in 1999. And I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, when you look at a number of the election platforms of 1999, unfortunately . . . Mr. Speaker, we're pleased that we brought . . . took a platform to the people of Saskatchewan in 1999.

While we came within a hair of forming government, in fact had more electoral votes than the government of the day, the government of the day, well they said no, you can't reduce taxes; no, you can't put more money into highways. They finally realized that people of Saskatchewan believed you could. And I'll give the ministers of Finance a compliment for

the fact that they've realized taxes are a tax burden and they really take away from stimulating the economy. So they've actually moved forward in some of those ideas and we want to say thank you to the governments for those initiatives that have been taken.

However, Mr. Speaker, this government and the ideas that it's presented to the people of Saskatchewan have been very limited. Unfortunately they've been always looking to somebody else for new ideas. They were devoid of ideas when they went into the 1999 election campaign. And we see today, as a result of the recent Throne Speech and certainly the budgetary address that was presented the other day, Mr. Speaker, we see a government that really is floundering, that doesn't know where it's going.

And, Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is look at some of the issues that have come forward in the past few weeks.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, one would have to surmise . . . And I think the media and a lot of people were believing that this would be a very short session, that the government . . . the budget that was presented last Friday was going to be a pre-election budget, and that this government was sailing on into an election where they were expecting that the people of Saskatchewan would return them with a majority.

However what we've seen, Mr. Speaker, what has happened in the last month? We've seen SPUDCO has risen its ugly head and as a result, the government's had to deal with that issue. We sealed the . . . We see the fact that the government has come forward with another budget that really is a flop. In fact it's dropped like a lead balloon, Mr. Speaker. And we know how balloons float if they've got lead in them. They don't rise very high, Mr. Speaker.

And today the Minister of Culture and Youth stands in this Assembly and tells us of how committed they are of protecting the rights of women and standing up for women. And yet the actions of this government just do not indicate that they're really standing up for the rights of women in the case that's just been brought before us today, Mr. Speaker.

So there's been so many things in the past few days that certainly would indicate that this was anything but a pre-election budget. In fact the actions of the Premier would indicate that he hasn't been very pleased with how his government has performed and how his ministers have performed.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the . . . When we look at the budget, and all we have to do is look at the headlines. I think the government . . . In fact, Mr. Speaker, when I think back to last Thursday and the Premier and the minister responsible for, well, what was Social Services, announced to the people of Saskatchewan a program that would be putting money into daycare spots in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I thought at the time that was very interesting considering the budget was coming down the next morning, that an announcement of that nature would be probably something they'd want to have in their budget so that they'd have a little positive to bring out of the budget.

But I think what we saw, Mr. Speaker, was the Premier and the ministers saw that really their budget was going south so quickly that they figured they'd better grasp the one little straw, the one little straw they had that — regarding daycare centres and spaces — that they better get it out ahead of the budget so that they get a little bit from it.

However we haven't seen a lot and that's why a lot of the members today . . . And unfortunately I've been giving them a few platitudes for those spots as well. But they're important for people — young people who have been desperately looking for something new, something exciting; desperately looking for job opportunities that would really address their family needs so that they wouldn't always have to be looking to government for daycare spots or whatever to address the issues they have in regards to family finances.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the budget and what do the headlines read:

Gov't downplays negative reviews.

. . . last week's provincial budget hit the deck like a lead balloon . . .

“The Canadian Taxpayers' Federation said the NDP is living in fantasy land. Most importantly the people of Saskatchewan we spoke to over the weekend said this budget has no plan and no credibility.”

Another headline: “Melenchuk defends ‘fantasy’ forecast.”

Mr. Speaker, the government's present . . . the Minister of Finance's presentation about a balanced budget is anything but and certainly it's misleading to the people of Saskatchewan.

When the Minister of Finance was asked exactly how . . . what would happen if the government didn't reach its 6.8 growth rate the minister responded:

Finance officials haven't calculated what another year of drought would mean, Melenchuk told a scrum of reporters outside the legislature.

In fact I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that this government's view of growth and its ability to achieve 6.8 per cent growth, it all basically stems from agriculture and their view that agriculture is going to carry them out of their doldrums. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I think what we see, and I think the minister indicated that as well, he made the comment about:

I think we are a little more diversified than we were in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I think we all acknowledge the fact that agriculture certainly plays an important role in the economy of Saskatchewan but it does not have as significant an impact on the economy in the province of Saskatchewan as it did in the past.

And to think that a turnaround in agriculture would lift the growth target to 6.8 per cent I think is something, as we've seen in the papers, living in fantasyland. And maybe it has a lot to do

with the new hairdo that the Minister of Finance, we saw him sporting this past week, living actually in fantasyland.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important, it's important, Mr. Speaker, that this government and this Minister of Finance come clear with the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, when we see the headlines — “Melenchuk defends ‘fantasy’ forecast” it says; “No option B if there is a drought” — even the economists and the profs in our universities are calling the plan this government has brought forward as unsustainable.

In fact let me see what one of the professors that responded to the budgetary address said. He said:

The financial plan outlined in the provincial budget unveiled by Finance Minister Jim Melenchuk last week is unsustainable . . .

That comes from four University of Regina professors.

One of the professors said:

“We have a \$392-million deficit,” . . .

(Mr.) Tompkins isn't impressed by Melenchuk's claim that he can draw down money from the province's fiscal stabilization fund and thus claim he has produced a balanced budget.

In fact this economics professor goes on to say:

Enron executives in the U.S. went to jail for financial misrepresentations that weren't much worse . . .

Another economics professor says:

The budget is “misleading” . . . adding that the province has a deficit budget by any normal accounting procedure.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this budget, and my colleague the member from Canora-Pelly I believe summed it up very carefully, this budget is certainly a budget based on numbers drawn from fantasyland and this budget does not really speak to the real economic plight of the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to quote a couple of paragraphs from another article: “Provincial budget's impact unlikely to be lasting,” Mr. Speaker.

. . . yesterday's pre-budget announcement of \$3 million for child care, including \$1.8 million for 500 additional licensed child-care spaces, more money for early childhood services and an increase to child-care subsidies (was certainly something positive).

Beyond the fact (however) . . . the coalition government is again spending more than it is taking in (this, despite the expected revenue increases), the budget will add . . . (another) \$400 million to the provincial debt.

Added to the \$800 million in debt already rung up by the government since Lorne Calvert became premier in January 2001, Saskatchewan's debt will have increased by roughly

\$1 million each and every day Calvert has been in office.

Mr. Speaker, the pundits all across this province have looked at the budget and they've found it wanting. They've found this budget wanting in many respects. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what we've seen in this budget as well is the fact that this budget and the presentation the Minister of Finance has made hasn't really been upfront and truthful for the people of Saskatchewan.

To lead the people of Saskatchewan believing that we have a little better than a \$2 million surplus as a result of this budget is unrealistic, is unthinkable, in view of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that this budget actually adds to the debt of the province of Saskatchewan. And I think that's the most important aspect that has to be raised in regards to this budget that was presented last Friday.

Mr. Speaker, we all know what it is like to live in a situation where we're actually spending more than our revenues, the revenues that were coming in. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that at the end of the day we don't have a Fiscal Stabilization Fund to draw from. If we do, it's the line of credit that we go to the bank to draw from, Mr. Speaker. And that line of credit just adds to personal debt, and we see that growing, not only across this province but across this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's important for the people of Saskatchewan to note that this budget does nothing to build confidence in the province of Saskatchewan or build confidence in people's hearts and minds so that they would look at this, at Saskatchewan as a place where they would want to come and invest in, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are looking for somebody who will place a dream. They're looking for someone who will give them some hope of, a hope that tomorrow will be a brighter day. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget certainly fell far short in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, any time a government begins to rely or relies on gambling profits to meet its needs, Mr. Speaker, we see a government that falls deeper and deeper into the gambling habit themselves — gambling on the hope that the resources down the road or the agriculture or the resource sector will grow at rates far exceeding any rate predictions of growth that any economist or the banks across this country would even suggest are plausible or possible at this time.

Mr. Speaker, we look at all the predictions regarding economic growth across this country, and I think the best one that I've seen so far is around 3 per cent growth — 3 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And yet this Finance minister believes he can just reach into his magical hat and pull out 6.8 per cent growth in the province of Saskatchewan — 6.8 per cent growth. No wonder the economists in the province of Saskatchewan are saying it's unsustainable, because we take a look across this country and every province and even the country of Canada, 3 per cent is certainly . . . would be a lot more achievable.

However, Mr. Speaker, if that's the level that we achieve . . . is — I think I heard a comment something like 2.7 per cent, 3 per cent — if that's what we achieve, we're 3.8 per cent short of the

goal and one has to ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, where are we going to be at the end of this fiscal year, having fallen short of our predicted economic growth of 3.8 per cent?

Mr. Speaker, I might add that one of the positive points that the Minister of Finance came forward with was bringing forward summary financial statements and, Mr. Speaker, I think that's important.

(16:45)

That's another area that over the past number of years my colleagues and I have been talking about the fact that it is important that the province come forward with budget . . . with summary financial statements. Why, Mr. Speaker? So that the people, the taxpayers of this province, know exactly where they stand when it comes to the finances in the province of Saskatchewan.

Monday, March 31, *The StarPhoenix* headline was, "Budget reform overdue move." And they were talking about the government's pledge to provide a summary financial plan as part of the budget is great news.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked about this for a number of years. Mr. Speaker, the auditor of this province has talked about summary financial plans for years. And the fact that the Minister of Finance has mentioned that this is something that we will . . . that their government is going to head into or down the road we're going to head in that direction, certainly is great news.

And why is it? I'd like to read this line from the . . . this, I know, article in the paper:

Under a system that produces a spending document such as the one Melenchuk presented Friday, where a supposedly balanced budget for next year could end up adding . . . 500 million to Saskatchewan's debt if his projections hold true, the public remains (as) clueless as to the true state of the province's finances.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of summary financial statements cannot be underscored. Mr. Speaker, it's important that we present the whole fiscal picture, not just the general revenue pool over here, and then someday down the road we get . . . we bring the figures from the Crown corporations. And as we have seen for time, time in eternity, if a government is running a debt in the general revenue pool, they'll pull something out of the Crown corporations through a dividend from CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) or, as we've seen over the last few years, actually borrowing money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund where money does not exist.

And so that's why it's so important that we move to summary financial statements in order to, in order for the people of Saskatchewan to understand exactly what the finances of this province are, so when the Minister of Finance stands in his place, when he . . . any government member stands in their place, the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what they're talking about.

So we'll give the Minister of Finance a platitude for the . . . suggesting that it's time to move to summary financial

statements. However, here again, Mr. Speaker, just another platform that the Saskatchewan Party has promoting for a long . . . been promoting for a long time, about bringing forward summary financial statements. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, we've been saying it long enough that the government members have finally heard. And while they've been maybe listening to the auditor, they're also realizing that taxpayers of Saskatchewan are demanding the same thing. They're demanding accounting. They're demanding accountability from the elected officials in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we could go on and on about this budget. We can talk about . . . and well we can talk about some of the positive aspects of the budget and there are areas though . . .

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services just stood in this Assembly — and I'll get his new department correct in the . . . shortly . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Community Resources and Employment, exactly. He talked about meeting the needs of people with disabilities and opening up the doors for greater job opportunities. And in that regard I think that's positive. That certainly is positive and we'll give credit where credit is due.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do know that the minister and his office have been receiving a number of letters from communities like Prince Albert, communities like Esterhazy, and certainly the Moosomin community and areas around Moosomin as well where individuals on their own have gone to great lengths to raise the resources to provide some support mechanisms for families with people with . . . with young people with disabilities.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm waiting for . . . till we get into, I guess when we get into greater debate on the budget speech — line-by-line debate — with the minister to see whether or not the minister has been listening to the people of Esterhazy, been listening to these families with children of disabilities, and has responded to their requests for some financing to address their needs to help them in providing some of that respite care that gives them a break, which they have on their own have had to do by raising the funds and actually getting local individuals to help them and assist them with providing care.

And I think the minister was trying to catch my attention, I'm not exactly sure why. But, Mr. Speaker, there's one other thing I have to actually . . . actually I have to mention before we get to that point and it's this, Mr. Speaker. The one area that the community of Moosomin and the surrounding area have been working very deliberately towards is a new health facility, a new hospital. And as I was listening to the budget presentation by the Minister of Finance the other day, unfortunately the final approval and go-ahead did not come from the Minister of Finance.

But I did hear the Minister of Finance suggest and say that the Minister of Health will be making some very important announcements in a number of communities over the next little while regarding worthwhile projects. And so the Moosomin community are certainly looking with anticipation, and looking forward with anticipation, to an announcement regarding that health facility in view of the fact that they have been working very diligently to provide their level of funding support for this health care facility.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are so many other areas that I could get into and debate at length. However, I look forward to debating these issues when you get into line-by-line debate on . . . in regards to the budget.

However, at this time, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly be more than prepared to take my place so that other members speak . . . by basically stating I really can't support this budget but I will be in support of the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to entering the debate to support the budget but because of the time constraints, I'm going to ask that we now adjourn, Mr. Speaker, or I move to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:53.

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