

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise again on behalf of producers in the Cypress Hills area and other communities throughout the Southwest who are opposed to the position taken by the government on the issue of Crown grazing lease renewals. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by producers from the communities of Gull Lake, Tompkins, and Hazlet.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine very concerned about the condition of Highway 47. 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, you petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Bienfait, Estevan, and Roche Percee.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of residents of southwest Saskatchewan concerned about the issue of the renewal of Crown leases. 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 take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the communities of Lancer, Abbey, Sceptre, and Eston, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition from citizens of my constituency that are opposing the government's handling of the crop insurance rates. And 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 to our struggling farmers.

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 hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 12, 13, 19, and 18.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Special Committee on Rules and Procedures

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, . . . (inaudible) . . . the Special Committee Rules and Procedures hereby presents the committee's third report which is hereby tabled.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to be able to speak to the report and to move concurrence of it. I will do so at the end of my remarks.

I want to say to members of the Assembly that the work of the Rules Committee is now essentially complete. We have spent the last several years taking a look at how we can modernize our procedures here in the Assembly, how we can streamline them, and how we can open up our proceedings so that there's more public, direct public input, into our discussion and our review of legislation.

The proposals that we had first envisioned on this side in 1999, as I had . . . we'd come back from the '99 election and I had the opportunity to speak to you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleague from . . . the new colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow about some of the things that we could perhaps be doing differently in this Assembly — things that would make this Assembly more open, more accountable, more democratic; that would allow us to have a better debate and hopefully restore some of the collegial atmosphere that I think citizens expect of us in the debates and the proceedings here.

The result of this work has been a unanimous report out of your Rules Committee that enjoys a strong bipartisan support. I appreciate the advice that has been presented by members

opposite as they've come to the table with new ideas and other perspectives. And I very much appreciated the input that we've had from members on this side who come from a variety of different backgrounds, that have a real breadth of experience of many years legislative service — some very new, some who have been through many different . . . served in many different assemblies here.

The result of this, Mr. Speaker, I believe is that we will have a committee system that is in place that is more effective, is more efficient, that provides us with an opportunity to engage the public very directly. And if I may just say, I think of all of the changes that we are making and recommending that the Assembly adopt, it is very much the change to the committee system that opens up the proceedings so that we can receive delegations and hear direct comments from the public in terms of the benefit and strength of legislation that we're discussing.

Mr. Speaker, this will change the way that we as members deal with our constituents. It will change the way that we deal with each other. I believe that this is a very important move forward.

The basis of this, of these changes, really fall into the three areas. One is increasing the . . . strengthening the democratic process that we have here. The second, of course, is in terms of streamlining process. We have an institution that has served us well for most of the last hundred years in this province, but there are always ways that we can seek to find a more streamlined process and to modernize our Assembly.

Over the last several years, the committee has reported twice to this Assembly and has sought changes. One of the biggest changes that we will now seek in terms of this is to recognize the impact that information technology is having on us: our ability to communicate with constituents; the fact that we have the ability now to put our papers on to the Web sites; for us to have streaming video and streaming audio carried across the Internet; and our ability through this report to provide the members here with the ability to access Internet while in the Chamber I think is very significant.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that I think it's important to recognize that while these are probably and have been characterized as perhaps the most significant changes to the way our legislature works since 1905, that they do in fact build on a strong record of democratic reforms that we have taken as members in this Assembly over the last decade in particular. And I think the public may be interested to know in terms of the approach that all parties have taken in this Assembly to moving forward with democratic reform.

It's hard to believe that it was just 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker, that we were debating whether or not the provincial budget should come down before the end of the fiscal year. This change has come into place. The budgets are now routinely presented before the end of the fiscal year.

We have talked about and provided for the timely release of Public Accounts, which unfortunately fell out of favour during the 1980s. We've strengthened the support for the auditor's office and the Ombudsman. We've undertaken Human Rights Commission reform.

The fact that today we have province-wide TV and radio coverage is a democratic reform undertaken by this Assembly during the past decade. Other parties and our party have called for independent electoral boundaries commissions. I think it's important to note that this Assembly has in fact acted on that, and we have changed our boundaries in accordance with independent review.

We've enhanced the role for private members in this, and indeed this report we're presenting today will further strengthen that by providing a more active role for private members on both sides of the House to engage in policy discussion, to have a more active role in legislation, in the study of Bills, and in the review of estimates and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that you are elected by the members of this Assembly, as is the Deputy Speaker, is another democratic reform initiative that's been enhanced over the last 10 years. There was a time when it was a pro forma motion to appoint the Speaker and as I think we all know, we have had in recent years contested elections for the Deputy Speaker's position.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the strength of other reforms in terms of providing timely by-elections. We've seen the benefits of this government's decision to implement a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. We have balanced budget legislation. We've got utility rate review process.

Not all of these, may I say, Mr. Speaker, not all of these ideas come only from the governing party, from the NDP (New Democratic Party), but in fact the result is from work from other parties also.

These are reforms that I think all members should be proud of because they do change the way that we have moved forward.

I think that the reforms that are being proposed today that have been recommended by the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, with strong bipartisan support, really do take us in a new and exciting direction and build on the strength of what we've seen.

As such, Mr. Speaker, I want to move, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That the third report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures be now concurred in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to stand today to comment on the new rules and procedures that are being presented to the House by the Rules and Procedures Committee.

This project has been in the works for a considerable period of time. In fact I looked back on the Internet to see when we held our first meeting, and it was on December 17, 1999, Mr. Speaker, so three and a half years ago. Three and a half years it's taken to sit down and work through the rules dealing with the legislature.

The decision made early by the committee was that we would

emphasize, we would investigate and come forward with recommendations, and the first part dealing with two areas. And those areas, Mr. Speaker, were committees of the legislature and private members' day.

And I believe that we have come forward with recommendations that reflect the interests of both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker, and the needs of both sides of the House. Regardless of which party is in government and which party is in opposition, Mr. Speaker, these rules are, I believe, going to reflect fairly on the needs and aspirations of both groups, government and opposition, regardless of the parties.

One of the items that it allows, Mr. Speaker, is indeed more participation by the public. Whenever legislation is presented to the Assembly, basically it's a *fait accompli*. The government, because of the majority they have, have the ability to drive that particular piece of legislation through. And the public, who are just finding out about any particular piece of legislation, have very limited opportunities to have any input into this.

Now it's always hoped that the governing party has discussed the issue, the piece of legislation with the concerned stakeholders. But sometimes the general public has an interest in the issue as well and want to have an opportunity to have their ideas heard and have some input.

These recommendations, Mr. Speaker, when implemented, will have that opportunity for the public to come forward and have a say during the committee sessions. I believe that's a major change for most legislatures across Canada, that we will be in the forefront of legislative change when we implement these rules, Mr. Speaker.

We took a look as a committee at the best practices we could find across the Commonwealth, Mr. Speaker, in those jurisdictions we felt that had a similar system to our own and that would serve the people of Saskatchewan to the most appropriate manner. And we believe that the recommendations coming forward from the Rules and Procedures Committee do provide that opportunity.

(13:45)

You know, when you just take a look at our Web site, Mr. Speaker, and you look at our committee system, you would think that we have a very good and strong committee system. Well appearances, Mr. Speaker, do not belie reality.

We, actual fact, Mr. Speaker, have many committees that never sit — that have not sat for 20, 30, 40, 50 years. We have a number of committees, Mr. Speaker, that sit rarely in that time period.

We have some committees that are very active and are very strong, Mr. Speaker, such as Public Accounts, Crown Corporations. We have the committees that do work during session, such as Private Members' Bills, the Committee on Regulations, Mr. Speaker, and those were doing the job.

But, Mr. Speaker, we believe as a committee that there was a role for all of the members of the legislature to play within the structure, and these rules allow for that, Mr. Speaker.

Also the second part of the report, Mr. Speaker, is private members' day. Private members' day was becoming irrelevant, Mr. Speaker, because while motions were presented, they never had a resolution. The changes that we are presenting, Mr. Speaker, allow for both private members' Bills and private members' motions to have a resolution. They're voted on, Mr. Speaker — yea or nay — and a decision is made. They're not just simply presented and then lost in limbo. And we believe that that is going to provide a benefit for members on both sides of the House.

There were many flaws in the rules of our Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and those flaws were certainly seen in the 1980s and they were seen as well in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker. And that's why this committee was struck in 1999, to review all of the failures in the rules that this House was operating under. The lack of ability by members of this Assembly to participate fully as members was recognized and these recommendations move us down that road, Mr. Speaker.

A number of our committees, committees other than the Committee of the Whole and Committee of Finance which sat on the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, were rarely, if ever, broadcast. We've had two or three examples in the last few years where committee work outside of the legislature was broadcast. Now, Mr. Speaker, all the committee work will have the opportunity to be broadcast.

And we need, Mr. Speaker, to provide that opportunity for the public to see and understand the work of the legislature. I believe that's a large part of the democratization of this Assembly, and providing the ability of the public to see and understand legislation and estimates by viewing it from the beginning, the introduction, to its closure, Mr. Speaker, on the final vote.

And that helps people understand the work of the Assembly. It helps them to understand that the work of the legislature isn't simply the 25 minutes of question period that is generally reported, Mr. Speaker, throughout the media of this province. I think it's going to be very helpful for us as legislatures in dealing with our constituents, if they understand the process better.

One of the new changes that wasn't even envisioned, Mr. Speaker, when we started this Rules and Procedures Committee was the idea of Internet in the Assembly. That, Mr. Speaker, is again another enhancement that we need to move forward with.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we need to support this motion to move forward the new rules of this legislature. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the recommendations before us do indeed represent some needed reform, but I think we should be alive to the fact that this House has lagged behind other parliaments and there's much more that needs to be done.

Some of the things that need to be done are matters of practice as opposed to rules. For example, as I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition can attest, in the federal government, standing

committees routinely examine legislation and have hearings on legislation prior to debate in the House of Commons.

Recently I appeared before the standing committee on Indian affairs, northern Canada examining the proposed new treaty governance Act. The good thing of this is that they hear from stakeholders and interested parties. Party discipline tends to be much weaker at the committee level, and input is received from members of all parties, including government backbenchers.

This has not been the practice in our House of course where typically the opposition does not see draft legislation until it reaches the floor of this House.

In our committees, legislation is rarely, if ever, referred to them. And party discipline in our committees has been absolute and the federal government party discipline at the committee level is not absolute. And I think that is another reform that needs to be looked at.

In the province, stakeholders are consulted about proposed government legislation but typically on a promise of confidentiality. In most cases there simply is no reason for that confidentiality and secrecy. There's absolutely no reason why some of the proposed policy changes could not be debated in standing committee where opposition and government members together could receive input, where government members could feel free to offer views that may not be completely on par with those of the cabinets.

So I think these are reforms, these are improvements. I support them, but I believe that they should be viewed as a first step rather than a final step.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly I have some additional motions from the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

By leave I would move, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That the modifications and amendments to the practices and rules of the Legislative Assembly, as specified in the appendix to the third report of the Special Committee of Rules and Procedures be adopted and;

That when the said practices and rules are implemented by the Legislative Assembly, they be incorporated into the rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan as soon as is practicable, and further;

That upon implementation, the Clerk takes steps to ensure the rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan are made, printed, and republished in English and French as expeditiously as possible upon.

I so move, seconded by the member from Cannington.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Wireless Access to Internet

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would seek leave to move, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That in the interim period before refurbishment of the Chamber and technology upgrades can provide a more secure environment, the Legislative Assembly shall provide wireless access to the Internet from the Chamber and members' lounges, and that the said access be in place as soon as possible during 2003 spring session.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Amendment to Order of Reference for the Special Committee on Regulations

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, I would move, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That the order of reference for the Special Committee on Regulations be amended to provide a deadline for a final report, which shall be no later than 30 sitting days past the date of implementation of the new rules recommended in the third report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures by the Assembly.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Redirection of Committee Business

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the enthusiasm of members for all these motions that we are moving.

I seek leave to move one final motion on behalf of the committee. I move, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That any outstanding business identified by the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations in its fourth report be redirected to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies at such time as the Assembly implements the new rules recommended in the third report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 18 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: is any money paid out to the farmers who purchased crop insurance in the rainfall

pilot program of last year, 2002-03, in the forage side and grain side, and what was that amount?

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on day no. 18 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: since tobacco taxes were raised in the 2002-2003 budget, what has been the percentage increase or decrease in: (1) sales of taxable tobacco products; (2) sales of non-taxable tobacco products?

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 18 ask the government the following question:

To the Health minister: in light of yesterday's announcement for 500,000 in funding for planning and evaluation for a new regional hospital in Swift Current, has the government also formally approved its 65 per cent share of the funding for the actual costs of the new hospital?

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I shall give notice on day no. 18 . . . ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization: how much money did the producers of Saskatchewan receive from the \$6 million transition fund announced by the federal government in the year 2002?

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, I shall give notice that on day 18 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation: in reference to the commitment made by the Premier in the wake of the SPUDCO affair that all potential CIC investments will require a third party review, is the mechanism for such a review process in place; what is that mechanism; how many potential CIC investments have undergone such a review; and how many have been rejected after such a third party review?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I would like to introduce to you a constituent of mine. Seated in your gallery is Larry Johnson. Larry is from Estevan and he is here waiting for a load of vehicles to arrive in this city so he can transport them back to Estevan.

So I hope you enjoy your stay here, Larry, today and enjoy the proceedings. And I also hope that you have a safe journey back to Estevan.

I ask all members to please join me in welcoming Larry here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to address an issue that my colleagues in the Saskatchewan Party are extremely concerned about. That issue, Mr. Speaker, is workplace harassment, and more specifically sexual harassment.

The events of the last few days have resulted in some very insightful and meaningful discussions on sexual harassment at our caucus table, in our offices, and our communities at large.

The Saskatchewan Party believes that any kind of sexual harassment is unconscionable behaviour. The Saskatchewan Party believes that every citizen has the right to work in a non-hostile environment in which they are free from intimidation or coercion from colleagues or those in a supervisory role. It is disgusting and deplorable when someone abuses his or her power to sexually harass and bully a colleague.

It is important to ensure those accused of sexual harassment are afforded due process. It is equally important that victims of sexual harassment have closure and peace of mind that appropriate action has been taken.

Victims of sexual harassment must have confidence that their complaints are taken seriously and that there is a process in place that works and is being followed. Punishment must be meted out appropriately in relation to the offences and as expeditiously as possible so that victims can begin the healing process.

Sexual harassment is completely unacceptable and we must work to ensure its elimination from the workplace.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Province Fulfills Commitment to Fix Roads

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the title of this member's statement is province fulfills commitment to fix the roads.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with this government's tradition of meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people while managing the province's finances responsibly, we're investing \$292.6 million in highway improvements in fulfilling our three-year, \$900 million commitment to renew the transportation infrastructure in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that it's imperative that we have a highway system that enables us to capitalize on our opportunities and therefore we're accelerating the twinning of Highway No. 1 East and West and Highway 16 West.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're investing more than \$90 million over three years to finish upgrading 450 kilometres of highways in rural corridors to support movement of commodities in

agriculture, gas, and oil industries.

We're finishing 30 kilometres of Highway 6 between Regina and the US (United States) border to support increased trucking along that corridor and we're continuing to rebuild sections of northern highways to support the forestry industry as well.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition just can't contain their excitement about us fixing the highways. Building a strong and competitive transportation infrastructure is part of this government's plan to build Saskatchewan's future. And with our vision and our plan, Mr. Speaker, the future of this province is indeed wide open.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Watrous Wildcats Provincial 2A Champions

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to rise in the legislature to offer my personal congratulations to all the players and coaches of the Watrous Winston High School senior basketball team. On March 22 in Saskatoon, the team captured the provincial gold medals in its first-ever provincial basketball championship.

Hoopla 2003, the Saskatchewan high school provincial basketball championship, proved to be a victorious tournament for the Watrous Winston Wildcats playing at the 2A provincial level.

This team had fought hard for the wins which then advanced them to the number three ranking of the final four teams at the Saskatoon event. They then went on to defeat the number two ranked team from Birch Hills in the semi finals and completed the sweep with a final victory over the number one ranked Porcupine Plain Bears.

Team coaches Darren Holland and Ralph Eliasson are extremely pleased with the team's victory and great performance throughout the season. Mr. Eliasson said that the team won 32 of their 41 regular season games; were led by the four top scorers including Chas Potter, Kevin Sundquist, Mitchell Eliasson, and Andrew Penrose.

Coach Eliasson said:

I've been coaching this team since the grade 8 level and I'm retiring from coaching this year. Winning provincials is a great way for our team to end (this session . . . or end) the season.

I would ask that all members join me congratulating the Watrous Wildcats and their gold medal provincial championship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regional Economic Development Authorities in Saskatchewan

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the strength of grassroots business and community development is due in large part to the activity of the regional economic development authorities.

There are 28 REDAs (regional economic development authority) in the province, Mr. Speaker, developing and promoting the economic strengths of their regions. They represent collaboration among local governments, businesses, co-operatives, and First Nations.

REDAs successfully promote local economic opportunities and support the work of entrepreneurs seeking to build businesses in Saskatchewan. They are shining examples of the partnerships that are building our economy.

The REDA program was established in 1993. Under the program, the government provides each REDA with cost-shared operating funding to a maximum of 60,000 per year. REDAs can also access additional funding for youth employment, joint initiatives with other REDAs, and regional infrastructure projects.

REDAs offer communities the opportunity to create jobs based on the strength of their regions. REDAs enable the projects that create jobs in many sectors — tourism, technology, manufacturing, and agri-value, to name a few.

This government is proud to support local businesses through grants to REDA network, something apparently Sask Party policy does not embrace. They have a slogan bred by a right-wing agenda which ignores the realities of the Saskatchewan experience.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, we have a plan and it's working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kindersley Students Advance to Canada-Wide Science Fair

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Kindersley is home to two outstanding students who will be travelling, all expenses paid, to Calgary to compete in the Canada-Wide Science Fair in May. Sean Hillacre and Megan Olivier of Wendy Johnson's grade 7 class at Westberry School were selected by a panel of judges at the regional science fair held in Leader on March 20.

These projects were chosen from 230 displays by grade 7 to 12 students from Leader, Beechy, Coleville, Kindersley, Richmond, and Plenty. Sean's project, a study on cloning entitled, Just Cloning Around, earned him a second-place finish, and Megan's display was entitled, Sink or Swim, and placed third. It explained the effects of different oils on plants and fish.

Twelve of Ms. Johnson's students took part in the fair and six of ten cash prizes to junior students went to her grade 7 class. Ms. Johnson said the entries required a lot of hard work by the students and they learned so much. She said it's great that they are recognized for their efforts. The science fair really stressed the scientific method, which leads them through the research and guides them in gathering useful information. They can choose from a study, an innovation, or an experiment.

The content at the science fairs have improved over the last number of years. The topics have become more sophisticated

due in a large part to access to technology. There are 12 regional science fairs in Saskatchewan.

Please join me in congratulating these inspiring young people on their achievements and wishing them great success in Calgary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Investing in Northern Saskatchewan

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, more good news from northern Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this government's northern strategy is an integral part of our vision to build a strong future for this province with opportunity for all.

Our focus in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, continues to be supporting the development of strong, vibrant communities; healthy, self-reliant families; and on creating opportunities for our young people.

With these goals in mind, Mr. Speaker, this government has increased northern revenue-sharing grants to northern municipalities from \$5.2 million to almost \$6 million. We have allocated half a million dollars to northern health authorities for implementation of a northern health initiative. We have allocated 2.1 million for training spaces provided under the northern skills training program, and a further almost half a million dollars for additional training spaces provided under the northern health access program. We have increased funding for economic development, education, infrastructure, and housing.

Mr. Speaker, we are listening to northerners and building strong partnerships with them. Our policy, budget, and action are open and inclusive of people in northern Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Public Library Definition Derby

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Regina Public Library is an organization that is committed to providing services that build literacy and promote lifelong learning. As part of this mandate, they have organized a dynamic event to promote literacy and I was very pleased to attend this function last night.

The Regina Public Library Definition Derby is a game-style event in which Regina media, business, and community organizations compete in a battle of word wisdom. Teams are asked to define the meaning behind a variety of different words, words that sound so foreign that it is difficult to believe that they're actually from the English language, let alone from the Webster dictionary.

What this event demonstrates, Mr. Speaker, is the unfamiliar world the English language is to thousands of Canadians who live in our country and who function with a limited or very low literacy level. The written word, the spoken word, even computer literacy can be like a foreign language to many Canadians.

Literacy levels affect the jobs we get, shopping, driving, and

finding an address, even the books we can read to our children. Literacy is the foundation of social and economic well-being in our community. Regina Public Library currently has over 250 tutors matched with learners in Regina, but hundreds more are waiting to be matched with a tutor.

The Definition Derby is much more than a game show. It is an event that successfully promotes awareness of workplace education and literacy issues.

Literacy, make it your business. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Reaction to Harassment Allegations

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. Mr. Speaker, yesterday and again today, the minister has commented to the media on the case of Murdoch Carriere.

This morning on the John Gormley show, the minister was asked if the deputy minister, who was responsible for this discipline, fell short of what he should have done originally. The minister said, and I quote:

I think the complicating factor in the department was that the person has worked for 32 years and was very, considered very, very good at their job.

Mr. Speaker, this government claims to have a zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment. And the findings of the independent investigator state that harassment did occur both in terms of abuse of authority and in terms of inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, given the investigator's findings and the government's policy, why did Mr. Carriere's work record take precedence in the initial decision by the deputy minister of Environment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My purpose in reviewing this report was to determine whether the decision made affected our policy intent of zero tolerance. It was my determination that it didn't.

And what I do feel is that we do need to provide stronger direction on when the situation is serious enough that the zero tolerance overrides work record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, during her comments, the minister went on to say that the deputy minister and I quote:

... had to make a determination whether the knowledge and skill and whatnot ...

that that employee brought to the job was overridden by his behaviour.

And as a result of the story breaking in *The StarPhoenix* and the minister's review of the case since, it is very obvious to the people of Saskatchewan that the wrong decision was made initially. Yet today the minister is still suggesting that this man's employment record had more influence than the fact he sexually harassed and abused six women over many years.

Mr. Speaker, the minister read the report and determined that Mr. Carriere should be fired for his actions. Why is this minister still making excuses for the decision by the deputy minister and speaking so highly of Mr. Carriere's work, when over the last decade he has sexually harassed fellow employees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, it must be a wonderful thing to be able to see the world in such black and white terms, but I have to say that in a responsible public service we respect the contributions that people make when they dedicate their entire lives to the public service.

I think what's important is that in this instance when the matter came to my attention, I determined that we had a policy that took precedence over our desire to always pursue constructive discipline.

So, Mr. Speaker, the policy of zero tolerance overrode the policy of constructive discipline.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has also said to the media that the number of complaints in this case influenced her decision to recommend that Mr. Carriere be terminated from employment with this government. The minister said, and I quote:

I felt the volume of complaints, because you know you might sometimes have a complaint or a couple of complaints . . .

But to have this volume of complaints and the seriousness of complaints . . .

I felt that in order for people to understand that we were serious about zero tolerance, that firing was the only possible conclusion.

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister suggesting — that one complaint isn't enough? Mr. Speaker, if this government is serious about zero tolerance policy, why should the volume of complaints have to be high before a decision is made to terminate an employee found guilty of sexual harassment and abuse of authority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is

revealing a serious shortfall of knowledge in this area because there is a wide range of things that may be considered harassment — a wide range. Some of those are people not understanding that other people have different values than they do; some is not understanding that people feel different about things . . .

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now first of all I'm going to say that I will ask the member opposite, does she or does she not support the decision I made? I think that's very pertinent because there are two standards we're meeting here, Mr. Speaker. One standard is, did the harassment stop? Was the person removed from the ability to harass? That's the first standard.

And the second standard is, does it meet the standard of zero tolerance? And zero tolerance is related both to the level of the situation as well as the intensity of the situation. So I know it's difficult to actually have to think about some of these other factors, but at the end of the day I thought about all those other factors and then made a decision, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer the minister regarding her question on whether I eventually did approve of her decision. The answer was, yes; the minister knows that. That decision was made though, after the government was caught not making the proper decision in the first place. Mr. Speaker, . . .

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

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the minister made a statement just now in the House talking about not everybody has the same values as what the government does. Well I want to tell the minister today, I want to tell the minister today, that the women who were victimized by Mr. Carriere would certainly have expected that this government valued one of them, as well as six of them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, under The Occupational Health and Safety Act it's a requirement that every workplace in this province have an anti-harassment policy. And I would ask today that the Sask Party please table theirs with the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It now appears that the government and Saskatchewan taxpayers may be in some legal jeopardy over its handling of this sexual harassment case.

These probably wouldn't be much . . . There probably wouldn't be much grounds for wrongful dismissal if the NDP had handled it correctly and fired Mr. Carriere in the first place. The problem is that they didn't fire him. They instead made him a special adviser to the government and sent out a memo praising him for the excellent job he's been doing. That probably opens

up the government to legal action.

Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP mismanaged its own sexual harassment policy so badly that it may now face a costly legal action?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, facts have become known related to this case this week that has brought a different result with respect to this case, as has been outlined in this House.

Whether or not the Government of Saskatchewan will be made the subject of a civil lawsuit by Mr. Carriere remains to be seen. In the event that there is a lawsuit against the Government of Saskatchewan, it will be the position of the Government of Saskatchewan that the termination of Mr. Carriere was justified. We will defend that position vigorously in the courts. And in due course, Mr. Speaker, the courts will make the determination.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the only thing that's different about the events of this week is that now the public knows what the government has known for quite some time. It's quite different.

Mr. Speaker, I think the question that most people in Saskatchewan are asking is, why did the NDP government initially decide to protect a sexual harasser?

Now the Premier has promised to review how this happened. In particular he's going to review the actions of Terry Scott and the initial decision — that wrong decision, Mr. Speaker — not to fire Mr. Carriere and make him a special adviser to the government. This Premier's getting a lot of experience lately reviewing his government's mistakes.

Will the Premier please tell the people of Saskatchewan today what will be the terms of this review; how long will it take; and will he make the results known to the public like he did with the review of the SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) scandal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I will be personally, with my most senior officials, reviewing the process of decision making and the processes around complaints of sexual harassment and other violations of the workplace and, in specific, with regard to the decision that was made that when reviewed by the policy-makers of this government we felt was not the appropriate decision. I'm doing that, I will do it expeditiously, and I will be obviously speaking to members of the press or to members of the legislature about my finding.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, according to some of the victims, Mr. Carriere would often intimidate his victims by citing his political . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please, members. Order, please. Order, please. I'd ask the members not to interfere with the question.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Carriere would often intimidate his victims by citing his political connections to the NDP government and saying that he has fired people in the past. Now I'm not sure exactly what these political connections are other than what I've read in *The StarPhoenix* where it was reported that he's related to the NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Cumberland.

Mr. Speaker, people are wondering how an experienced civil servant like Terry Scott could have made such a bad, bad decision to protect a sexual harasser. As part of the current review that the Premier has committed to take, the people of Saskatchewan want to know, will the Premier commit to examine whether anyone, anyone in his government, intervened in the Murdoch . . . intervened on Mr. Murdoch Carriere's behalf to save his job?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Please, members, take note of the accusation that's being made in the Leader of the Opposition's comments here. Please take note. He is suggesting that a senior public servant in Saskatchewan was influenced or directed by a member of government to come to that decision. That is the accusation that he is making.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I invite that Leader of the Opposition to go out into the corridor and make that accusation. Mr. Speaker, the senior public service of the province of Saskatchewan . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — My knowledge of the senior public civic servant in Saskatchewan, in fact the entire public service in Saskatchewan, is a professional public service who, when they take decisions and make decisions and implement decisions, will be based on the best of their knowledge and the best of their ability and not, not, Mr. Speaker, on political influence other than representing the policy of government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I make no accusation. I asked a question. The NDP, the NDP doesn't want the Leader of the Opposition to ask a question . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I will repeat . . .

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm almost feeling a little harassed myself here by the NDP.

I make no accusation; I simply asked a question. People want to know . . . they want some assurance that there was no political influence by the NDP in the initial decision to save Mr. Murdoch Carriere's job. That's what they want to know.

And this is a legitimate question because he is reported, he is reported publicly by the media to have used his political connections to intimidate his victims.

Mr. Speaker, because he is apparently related to an NDP MLA, this is relevant. It's a legitimate question, one we ask because the initial decision not to fire Mr. Carriere makes so little sense.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier's review simply ask the question, simply ask the question, did anyone in the NDP government intervene on Murdoch Carriere's behalf?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — . . . to note again the implication of that question. The implication of that question is to suggest the deputy minister of Environment would be influenced by a political instruction from this government. That is the implication. And if this Leader of the Opposition wants to go out into that corridor and suggest that this career public servant would take a decision about a matter of this significance based on political instruction, I invite him to say that.

Mr. Speaker, it is little wonder that he would suggest this. It's little wonder that he would suggest this today because it's not long ago that Leader of the Opposition made very clear his view of the public service of Saskatchewan. When asked about the public service, he said the following:

Before I agreed to run for the leadership I asked the MLAs: "Do you know who the deadwood are? Do you know who the skunks are?" (And) . . . They assured me they know who those people are.

That's his view of the senior public service of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Investments

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the NDP hand-picked president of SaskTel, Mr. Ching, made some clear statements about how SaskTel decides to make its investments. He said pretty clearly on the news that I saw that they will not make an investment unless there is a business case for that investment, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has gambled \$25 million on a high-risk US dot-com in Atlanta, Georgia called Retx.com.

Now according to SaskTel's most recent annual report, the NDP looks like they've lost about 7.5 million in taxpayers' dollars in their Retx investment. They invested 25 million, they've lost 7 million, and we understand the losses continue.

Mr. Speaker, what NDP business case was made to make this SaskTel investment in Atlanta, Georgia?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well let me say this first of all. SaskTel over the last number of years, since 1987 roughly, has invested two and a half billion dollars, Mr. Speaker — I repeat, billion dollars — here in Saskatchewan for

the benefit of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, what was said yesterday is absolutely accurate. They will not make an investment until a business case is presented and until they've done due diligence, Mr. Speaker.

But let me get to the heart of this real question, Mr. Speaker. The heart of this question is all about, Mr. Speaker, discrediting the Crowns, Mr. Speaker, so that they can put themselves in a position if they ever form government so they can sell these Crowns. Mr. Speaker, they have one single agenda — that's sell the Crowns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:30)

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what the minister should know is what this is all about is holding this NDP government to account for its irresponsible and risky investments all around the globe, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is, is that when SaskTel keeps its eye on the ball in the province of Saskatchewan, it's successful. It's when this government — this NDP government — risks millions of dollars around the world and across Canada, that's when we get into trouble, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another example of this is Persona Inc.. That's an NDP stock market play. They acquired about 7 per cent of this Newfoundland company in 2000 — 1.2 million shares at a price of \$12 a share. Well yesterday, Mr. Speaker, Persona was trading on the TSX at \$4.20. That means on the share value taxpayers have lost another \$9.5 million.

So again, the question in light of Mr. Ching's comment yesterday is this: what NDP business case was made to make this SaskTel stock market play investment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well that member can bob and he can weave and he can poke and he can jab but the point is, Mr. Speaker, the point is — the point is — is that SaskTel does a very good job for the people of Saskatchewan. They are over \$100 million to the good, Mr. Speaker, on their investments. So that member can pick out losses in companies that are start-up losses, Mr. Speaker. Many of them will prove, I predict, Mr. Speaker, to be good investments for the people of Saskatchewan.

The point is they have one agenda: privatization, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to refer to a quote if I could from *The Outlook*, Mr. Speaker. February 17, 2003 and I quote. It says:

But it is no secret the Sask. Party wants to rid the province of most Crown corporations, however, (and I quote) Brkich said the "core Crowns" — such as Sask Water, SaskPower, SaskTel and SGI — will be treated differently than the other "treasury Crowns", which (and listen to this) would not be sold off immediately, but when the selling price would reap the "best bang for the buck."

So the point is timing.

Closure of North Battleford Residential Facility

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are nine men residing in a halfway house in North Battleford who are halfway through a sexual offender treatment program. They have been told that the halfway house is to be closed and they are to be out by April 18. Their program is supposed to run until the end of June.

The leaders of that program are afraid that these men will drift away and drift back to their home communities in northern Saskatchewan without completing their sex offender treatment program. The government has been contacted and to date has refused to make any alternate arrangements.

My question for the minister: why is the halfway house being closed now in the middle of this sex offender treatment program and no arrangements being made for the inmates therein?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the member is better at fearmongering than he is at getting his facts straight. The fact is, is that of course we have an overcapacity within the CTR (community-training residence) system. We will be adjusting that as part of this budget.

But I want to say very clearly, as it pertains to those people in the facility that are receiving sex offender treatment, that are there on either probationary order or conditional sentences, conditional sentences and probationary orders will be obeyed. And we will continue to work with the prosecutors and the court system to make sure that these people receive appropriate training.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is right, that the order that they continue their treatment program is still in place, but the judge's order that they reside at the halfway house is not. And these people are not from North Battleford. They have no connections there. They now have no accommodation. They're to be out on the street by April 18.

The government has been contacted several times to say what is to happen to these men, where are they to go, where are they to stay. And the government has refused to make any provision for them, to make any arrangements. They're going to be on the street. The chances that they are simply going to drift away is very, very strong.

Why will the minister not commit to leaving the sex offender treatment program in place, a component of which is a place for these men to live and reside while it's on?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, the member is asking me why we won't leave the community-training residence in North Battleford open. I have answered that, that they have other spaces that can be dealt with throughout the province and they will be. Where we can offer this programming in other centres, and we do offer the programming in other centres, it will be dealt with.

And the member should be aware of that and should be very cautious in this fearmongering that I see on CBC (Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation) Radio and I hear in the House today. This is inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, because the court orders are very clear and the probation orders are very clear. And where they're necessary, we will make sure that on a case-by-case basis, that each of these individuals will be dealt with appropriately, they will have the process in place and the member opposite can be assured of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, this is the only medium-security sex offender treatment program in the province of Saskatchewan. A component of that program is that the men are in a halfway house where they're being monitored and they are in at least a semi-secure environment so we know where they are and the leaders of the program can continue with them.

The leaders of the program are asking, will you make provision so we know the men are being watched, they're in at night, we know they'll be at their program in the morning? The minister refuses to say what will be done, and he accuses me of fearmongering.

Mr. Speaker, it is not fearmongering to say, what is to become of these men who the minister has told are out on the street on April 18 with their program only half completed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it is fearmongering to say that these people will be turned out on the streets. The courts have dealt with them. They have ordered programming. It is inappropriate and incorrect to say that there is no other programming available in the province. That is not true, Mr. Speaker.

And it is interesting to note, in fact, that for the past year this program has not even been offered in North Battleford. His concern is not well founded.

We are going to make sure that every single person affected — not just in this community-training residence; the one in Regina, and in the . . . (inaudible) . . . Waden Bay — are dealt with appropriately.

The member should be assured that we will deal with every single member, every single individual that's involved, and they will receive the appropriate court-ordered treatment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please, members. Order, order. Members . . . I would ask all members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table written responses to questions 14 through 36 inclusive.

And just mentioning, the members opposite are now picking up the workload a little bit.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 14 through to question 36 inclusive have been submitted.

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.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put on record some of my concerns and the concerns of my constituents about the budget. I think the way the budget is presented and some of the debate, I think that it's not clear to the people back home how a budget and how the deficit and debt affects them in their communities and the service clubs that they belong to and the farms and businesses — and how that all affects them, Mr. Speaker.

As we have seen, Mr. Speaker, this budget is a fictitious budget. The budget is not balanced even though the government of the day tries to hide a deficit through various examples — trying to dip into the so-called Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which does not exist, and also taking money out of the Crowns to hide their deficit.

Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting when the government has been adding hundreds of millions of dollars onto the debt, what that does to the budget. As we see, the cost of servicing this huge debt is now \$650 million a year. That's the third-highest expenditure of this government. Health is approximately \$2.52 billion and Learning department is just over \$1 billion in relationship to a \$650 million servicing charge that the taxpayers of this province has to make up because of the growing debt of this government.

As we see, the overall debt has risen to \$12.2 billion now. In 1991 the debt was \$12.1 billion. So today's debt is higher today than it was when Mr. Romanow took over in 1991.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that there's always a great debate about where this debt came from. And as now, history shows us that a considerable amount of this debt that the province has incurred during the Blakeney years. And of course through the 1980s more debt was added on. Well into 1993-94 there was more debt added on under the NDP. And we have to give some credit to the . . . to Mr. Romanow and his government of the day that he did start reducing debt, did have balanced budgets.

But what we've seen since the present Premier came into office — even though he wasn't elected Premier; he assumed the role of Premier in this province by becoming the Leader of the NDP — and since the Premier came into office, there's been \$1.1 billion further debt added to the provincial economy.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious point. Even the former Finance minister, Janice MacKinnon, has wrote in articles and in her book that she has recently released that this is a serious concern to her and a serious concern to many economists and the people around Saskatchewan. Because as we have a growing debt, we have a growing service charge, and this really takes . . . Look all the things we could do with this \$650 million if we could put it into health or into education or into rural development.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is based on a 6.8 per cent economic growth for the province. And by all accounts, this is a number that is not accepted by forecasters — either private forecasters or government forecasters — anywhere in the country. The range of economic growth that is projected in Canada is anywhere from 3 to 4 per cent, and nowhere, no jurisdiction is estimating a economic growth of 6.8 per cent.

So you just take that into context if, as we all assume, that the growth of Saskatchewan will be someplace around half that — 3, 4 per cent — what that will do to our deficit. Right now it's about a \$500 million deficit. It could reach a \$1 billion deficit by the end of this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, unless just everything turns out perfect in the economy, in agriculture, and so on and so forth. And so it's quite a concern, Mr. Speaker.

This budget, as I was mentioning before, since the new Premier came to power has been adding \$1 million a day to the provincial debt. And this is a tremendous burden on the economy of Saskatchewan.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, it's not only just numbers, it's something that really affects people in the day-to-day business. And I'd just like to talk about . . . a bit about the agriculture budget. The agriculture budget has been cut by \$40 million or 14 per cent and this reduction comes entirely from farm stability and support programs.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've just gone through at least two years drought in many parts of this province and in the Northwest — three, four, five, even six years of drought. And in this very dire situation, farm support policies are very important to the business people of this province, the farmers of this province. And those areas cannot stand the government backing away from supporting them in the future by not putting . . . by cutting back the Agriculture department.

And of course we have seen the government increase the crop insurance premiums by a whopping 52 per cent. So not only the Department of Agriculture has been cut back by \$40 million, we see the crop insurance premiums raised by 52 per cent, adding an extra financial burden onto the farmers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

One more thing, Mr. Speaker, that is very concerning. The government . . . the Premier made an announcement at SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention that there was going to be a major announcement concerning the education portion of the property tax. So what do we see in the budget? Well we see that the government of the day is going to set up a commission, a committee, to go around and discuss

the issue.

Well just for the record, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put it on the record a letter from Prairie Pulse Inc., a Vanscoy company. And I'd just like to read this. It's to the village of Vanscoy:

Today we received our tax notices . . . for \$60,550.50 from the Village of Vanscoy both dated August 7, 2002. We regret to inform you that Prairie Pulse Inc. will NOT be paying any of these taxes until such time as the Village of Vanscoy and the Saskatoon West School Board significantly reduce our taxes.

And in the letter it states all the taxes that this company has paid. In the year 2000, it paid slightly under \$19,000. 2001, it's just about \$48,000 and of course 2002, a whopping \$65,000. The letter goes on:

Our tax burden increased over 251% in 2001 from the year 2000. Now in 2002 you are increasing our tax burden by another 36 per cent over 2001! Over the last two (2) years this represents an increased tax burden of more than 342%. You can blame the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency all you want. I do not care. In the end you have the power to adjust your mill rate, as does the Saskatoon (West) School Board. The amount that you are asking us to pay is nothing less than criminal!

If the village of Vanscoy feels it necessary to cut all the services to Prairie Pulse Inc. — so be it. They only provide us with water and sewer! We already have to pay for our own garbage removal and the maintenance of our "private road". We can arrange for our own water and sewer within one (1) week! We are so upset with the entire matter that we are prepared to go to the Supreme Court of Canada for justice. I suggest you get spending under control. We are willing to pay for our fair share — we just refuse to pay MORE than our fair share.

So this is an example what taxation, overburdening taxation does on individual families, individual businesses in Saskatchewan in the cities and rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to make a few comments about the Environment. I am the critic of the Environment. I notice, Mr. Speaker, that in the budget, Mr. Speaker, there has been a considerable decrease in the full-time equivalent staff. In 2001-2002 there was 25.9. In 2002-2003 it went up to 43.7. And now in this year's budget has dropped dramatically to 20.9, a drop of 22.8 full-time equivalent numbers. And there's a lot of questions concerning this drop in the numbers of staff in the Environment department.

And also, Mr. Speaker, have to point out that the Forest Fire Contingency Fund has basically . . . has disappeared. The fund estimated in 2001-2002 was \$40 million, Mr. Speaker, and now it is gone. So there's no contingency fund. So I don't know if the government is just crossing their fingers that there isn't going to be any forest fires or what its plan is.

But it certainly has an impact on the books and how the books . . . whether they balance or not. And I believe that there's going to have to be money set aside at some point for the forest

fighting. And I assume it's going to come out of general revenue and it's not really listed in the budget whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another very important item in Saskatchewan is the Kyoto accord. Now nowhere in this budget do I see the government having set aside any money, or projections, or discussions in the Throne Speech or in the budget concerning the Kyoto accord. And as we have seen, Mr. Speaker, the provincial Department of Industry and Resources estimated Kyoto could cost as much as 2.6 billion in economic output by 2020.

SaskPower estimated that Kyoto would cost the provincial power utility as much as 250 million per year. IPSCO, one of Saskatchewan's largest industrial companies, has indicated ratification of Kyoto could force the company to move to the United States. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation estimates ratification of the Kyoto Protocol will cost every family in Canada approximately \$2,700 per year, and more if they live in Saskatchewan or Alberta.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's quite a concern that the government hasn't done any planning, any foresight, or thinking about the impact of the Kyoto accord. And it's very important that this government does some thinking in that area because it's going to potentially cost Western Canada, and especially the oil and gas industry, a lot if this accord proceeds as we understand it, or as most people don't understand it — probably the best word to put it. We don't know where this is going.

As we see the federal Liberals . . . when their base of support was concerned about the car manufacturing industry in southern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberals exempted the Ontario's car manufacturing industry from Kyoto. And so we have to look at what this accord will be doing to Western Canada, and Saskatchewan in particular, and the western oil and gas industry.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments on . . . Actually last night I went to the Ducks Unlimited banquet and fundraiser. And it was interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that part of the Ducks Unlimited presentation that we had before the banquet and fundraiser was really an explanation of what they do and what their goals and dreams are. And one line really stuck out at me, and the line goes like this: "Saskatchewan can grow Saskatchewan and preserve our natural heritage."

And I believe that's fundamental. The Saskatchewan Party has been talking about growing Saskatchewan, the plan to grow Saskatchewan that the Saskatchewan Party has — and Ducks Unlimited also would agree — that we can grow Saskatchewan and preserve our natural heritage. And I think the two things must go hand in hand together.

I believe that both the environment and our economic base must be sustainable; one cannot proceed with the other. And I believe working in partnerships with people like Ducks Unlimited and other associations, that we can achieve that end result. And I think it's very important that we have partnerships between government, agriculture, industry, and the environment, and make this province not only a better place to live but also a growing economy where we have a growing tax base so we can

grow the province and the economy for our children and our grandchildren.

Other areas that are a concern in the Environment department is the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' interference in Saskatchewan. And it's interesting. I was sitting with a gentleman at the banquet who is . . . belongs to the Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan, and he said he was going to a meeting a week today he was saying, he's meeting with the Canadian Coast Guard. And he was meeting with the Canadian Coast Guard because of an issue in Saskatchewan, one of Saskatchewan's lakes. And it's, I mean it's laughable to think that this gentleman has to negotiate with the Canadian Coast Guard in Saskatchewan concerning our water and our ecotourism potential that we have in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I received, recently received a letter. I have had a lot of correspondence with the . . . with this group, and it's the Redberry Regional Economic Development Authority Corporation. And I spoke in length other times and it . . . well the authority . . . I'll just read a bit of the letter:

The Redberry Lake area in West Central Saskatchewan was designated as a World Biosphere Reserve in 2000 through UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program. The biosphere area spans portions of four rural municipalities, one urban municipality, and one First Nations reserve. All have representation on the Board of Directors of the Biosphere Committee.

And the letter goes on about all the good things they've been doing and the history of the biosphere. And it's . . . They've been holding meetings for a number of years and doing a lot of work. And they invited out the director of the Sask Ag and Food and Rural Revitalization. And this person said that the committee has to sell ourselves and our business plan to agencies and organizations related to the biosphere reserve.

And all the proposed groups currently have invested in the biosphere reserve area and undertaken projects that would contribute towards a common goal. They cite Ducks Unlimited, natural conservatory of Canada, the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), have put . . . committed funds in that area.

And it's also interesting that:

The only school located in the biosphere reserve has very recently achieved the long-term goal of being accepted to participate in the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPNet). This has been another example of lack of support from the provincial government; participation in the UNESCO . . . program requires the designation of a Provincial Coordinator from the Provincial Department of Education, which has not been forthcoming. Letters were written to the . . . (then minister and also the current minister, and the letter goes on.) We felt that this would absolutely meet with their approval and consequently the designation of a Provincial Coordinator to oversee the program in Saskatchewan would be appointed. Somehow they failed to see the merit in this and chose not to appoint anybody. Through our continued communications with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's ASPNet National Coordinator, our immense desire to offer this initiative to

our students was recognized and currently we have begun participation in the program under the direction of the National Coordinator himself.

And, Mr. Speaker, what the group wants is a commitment of some long-term funding. They've had bits and pieces given to them but not enough to . . . First thing they wanted to do was open or re-open the interpretive centre which was closed because of the provincial government cutting its funding. And they've had some help there but not enough to do a proper job.

And what they would like to do is have the funds available to hire a coordinator to work in the whole area for the economic development in the whole area, not just necessarily at Redberry Lake but the Redberry Lake would be one piece of the economic development ecotourism that has such a huge potential in that area.

We think of the Canadian Light Source; we have many people coming to Saskatchewan and Saskatoon, both Canadians and people from around the world, to work at the Canadian Light Source. And it would make a lot of sense to have possibly a tourist package or a tour package set up to go out to the biosphere at Redberry Lake, possibly could include the First Nations people, and have a tour and a tourism package that would fit nicely with what's going on in Saskatoon at the Canadian Light Source.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. One other item that today came up in question period concerning SaskTel and cellphone service and the Internet service. And I've questioned the minister and CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) many times about that. And again they talk about having a business plan for the services, and it's part of what we needed in that Redberry Lake area, in the Hafford, Blaine Lake area, Leask area, is proper cellphone service and Internet service. And again the government and the Crown corporation is not willing to provide that service.

And that area needs those services in order to build their economy in that area, and one must follow the other and I believe the government's very delinquent in how they are approaching services in that area.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, I will . . . would like to continue asking the Minister of Environment a number of other questions in the upcoming weeks once we get into committee. But at this time I'd like to just say that I will not be supporting the budget but I will be supporting the amendment to the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to be able to rise and respond to this budget speech to reflect on the many good things that are in this budget and the impact that they may have on this province in the year ahead and in fact in the decades ahead.

But before I get into talking about the budget in detail, what I would like to do is say some thank yous because there are a lot of people that work together to enable us to work in this legislature.

And first of all I would like to say thank you to my family — Gail, Alaina, and Daniel — for all the support that they give me to enable me to come here to spend the long hours that I do working on behalf of the government with the cabinet, with the Department of Highways and Transportation. They have been just tremendous.

I would also like to say thank you to my constituency assistant, Donna From, who has done a tremendous job since I was elected in '99. Donna is very capable, works very hard, and is a creative and compassionate person. So I'm thankful to have her support as well.

I have a tremendous staff in my ministerial office and I also want to say thank you to Dave, Florence, Gina, Michelle, and Perry. They give me tremendous support and backing. They have the information that I need. They do that by working with a department that I would say is second to none, who do tremendous work not only for me but for this whole government and for this province.

And I think at a time like this where we're facing heavy snows and difficult times out on our highways, I think there has been a lot of planning that has gone in to try and deal with days like this. The highways hotline has been very busy and I would encourage all those who are listening to remind friends and remind family that if they're going out on the roads in these days to please call the highways hotline first so that they can find out what the conditions are before they venture out. We hope that all who are travelling have a safe journey on our province's highways and roads.

So with those thank yous, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on to talk about this budget. And one of the pieces of this budget that I think has raised a lot of questions for people has been the projection about what kind of growth we'll have, a 6.8 per cent growth. And some people have said, well that's preposterous. But we have had people who have done analysis on budgets for many, many years look at this budget, look at these projections and say no, that's absolutely doable. Established firms like Nesbitt Burns have taken a look at this budget and said, of course that's doable. We've seen that from a number of other fronts.

But I think the one person who maybe got it right was the cartoonist in *The StarPhoenix*, Mr. Johnsrude, in his cartoon where he did a picture — and it was being flashed here the other day — of “Jimmy and His Amazing Dreaming-in-Technicolor Coat.” Now I don't know whether Mr. Johnsrude realized how accurately he did get this. But with his reference to the multicoloured coat, of course he was referencing the story of Joseph in the Bible. And that story, I think the theology of that story has a lot to do with who we are as an NDP government and who we are as a people in this province who dream big, plan well, and work hard.

So let me bring this story back to light for those who may not be familiar with it and those who haven't looked at it for a

while — the story of Joseph and his many multicoloured coat. It was a gift from his father. He was a special young man. His coat was given to him and he used to dream a lot and think about how things should be. And his brothers didn't particularly like the way that he did things and they threw him into a well. He was picked up by travellers later, taken to another land where he started off not in the best of graces, but he was elevated as his wisdom and his knowledge became more apparent. I'm not saying that there's a direct parallel to the Minister of Finance, but certainly we can see some parallels in this story.

But as Joseph became more familiar with the people of the land and they became more familiar with him, they realized that he was beginning to understand them in a new way and that he listened so carefully to what they were saying and he could interpret their dreams. He could see what their dreams meant and he began to explain to them what those dreams meant. And he finally caught the attention of the Pharaoh, the leader of the day. He caught the attention of the Pharaoh and the Pharaoh had had dreams and he wanted these dreams interpreted as well. And so Joseph came forward and told the meaning for these dreams.

Now let me talk about the first, the major dream that was interpreted. This dream was about seven cows, fat cows, and there was also a second part of the dream about seven starved-looking, difficult cows. Well there's more detail but Joseph interpreted this dream for them to say that there were going to be seven very good years and that they should plan well around those seven good years because there were going to be seven years of great difficulty and drought.

They did plan well. Joseph planned for the Pharaoh, because the Pharaoh, in hearing this interpretation of dreams, realized the wisdom. And I'd like to quote from the Bible, from the book of Genesis, chapter 41, verse 37 and following, where the Pharaoh is just so pleased with the work that Joseph has done. So he says . . . the Bible says:

So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this man in whom is the spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and my people shall be ruled according to your word. Only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

And so Pharaoh made Joseph his adviser. And in that they took that dream, they planned well around it. They prepared for those seven good years. They built around those seven good years, prepared for the seven difficult years. Not only did the people of Egypt survive, but people from all around the world who were in need were able to come there and draw from the tremendous assets that they had built up during those seven good years.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at what we have done in this budget, and when I look at the planning and the hard work that have gone into this last decade, and I look at the hard work and the planning that is going into preparing for the next decade, I see parallels.

And when I look at this 6.8 per cent figure for growth, and I look at what that is based on — it is based on only a normal year in agriculture — I say we have dreamed well, we have planned well, and we will work well to make this province thrive and prosper for all people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — So I would like to commend Mr. Johnsrude on his good theological insight, and I would like to commend our Minister of Finance on interpreting the dreams of the people well and of putting those together in a budget that is sound and practical. And we will see how it impacts positively on the growth and the prosperity of this province.

Well at the same time that we have these wonderful dreams for this province, we are also faced with a group of people who sit opposite us, the Sask Party, who are so full of negativity, doom and gloom, that they can't see, they cannot see the good that is happening in this province.

They somehow seem to be able to twist every situation, every fact that comes out that looks at the good of this province, they twist it so badly and then they start shouting about it — the world is coming to deep trouble in this province. The sky is falling; it's terror for everybody, because of this NDP government, they say.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Sask Party doom and gloom view where they twist the facts and shout about it is the only problem or the biggest problem that this province has right now.

The attitude, as I spoke about in my Throne Speech, as the people who are in the chamber of commerce have spoken about, that negative attitude is probably one of the worst things that we have to deal with in this province.

So we paint the dream positive, we invest money in this province, we invest it in the key areas that people have said they need to have money invested in. And we hear back from many of the stakeholders that they are pleased, very pleased with the way that we have invested in this budget.

We have invested heavily in health in this budget and we will see our health care get better and better as a result of the policy developments and as a result of the budget.

We have invested heavily in education in this budget with new increases. And we will see the teachers, their new agreement being fully funded from what the increases are in education. We will see our education system get better and better as we build a wonderful future for the young people of this province and we enable them to get the best education possible.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested in the infrastructure of this province. This year again almost \$300 million of provincial dollars, of federal dollars, of Centenary Fund money — all of that going into building the highways infrastructure in this province.

We worked long and hard to get some federal funding to help pay for the twinning in this province. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, the twinning in this province is going to make a big

difference to the whole province. Why? Because people who come into the province see these good roadways; they want to see more of this province; they tour around; they see the beauty of this province and they are moved. They love this land of living skies. And people who love this land of living skies, and come to love the people, want to be here.

For these good highways that we're building are going to make a difference. People are going to be moved to come to this province, a province of beauty, a province of prosperity, and a province with a tremendous future.

We are looking at funding going into helping building our rural highway network as well. We are working with the prairie grain roads program, partial funding from the federal government to upgrade some of our main economic corridor roads in a rural Saskatchewan.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, people say, well why aren't you putting more into urban Saskatchewan? Why don't you put it all into the cities? That's where all of the votes are for the NDP, why don't you just support the cities?

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are here representing the province. The NDP government is not interested in pork-barrelling just for the vote. What we are about is trying to provide the best infrastructure that we can for all the people of Saskatchewan. And so we will build the roads in northern Saskatchewan, we will build the roads in rural Saskatchewan, and we will make sure that we bring those up to a standard that will help our economy to continue to grow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — We will partner with the municipalities, we will partner with the federal government, and we will build this infrastructure in this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, we will not ignore the cities. We know that the cities are of such value to the whole province. They are economic generators and I tell you, the working people in these cities, through the taxes that they pay, help support the life in rural Saskatchewan as well. And that's important for us to remember, how the distribution happens in this province. And so it is essential that we also support the people of the cities.

And when I look at the money that has gone into the cities in this new budget, I see a \$5 million increase for cities, \$5 million for rural municipalities. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, a 15 per cent increase has got to mean something to the mayors and the councillors of our cities.

I could not believe it. I could not believe it when I heard them — some of them — talking about how poor it was that they didn't get a full \$15 million.

We struggled around that table to try and make sure that we would give enough to every place of need in this province. We were not pork-barrelling in the decisions around this. We were looking at the priorities and we were saying, where can we put the funds of this province to have the best impact for all of the people of this province. That's what we planned; that's what we did, Mr. Speaker.

And I believe that the mayors and the councillors of our cities and our towns should be thankful — should be thankful — for the 15 per cent increase that they got: \$10 million last year, \$10 million this year, and a promise of \$10 million next year. Sixty million dollars in three years and they were upset? It was an insult? I can't believe it.

(15:15)

We care about these cities. We will work with our mayors, with our councillors — not only in grants that go to them, not only in that municipal grant — we will work them on the infrastructure basis, we will work with them to try and bring jobs into the cities, into the towns, and into the rural areas of this province. Why? Because we love this province. Because we dream big, and those dreams encompass all of this province. We plan well and in that planning we make sure that the dollars go to every part of this province.

And we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, because we want this whole province to prosper. We want every part of this province to be a destiny for people who want to come and make a life for themselves in a province where the taxes are some of the lowest in this country.

You hear that, Mr. Speaker? Some of the lowest in this country. Not only the personal income taxes, Mr. Speaker, but the business tax is going down again this year. We have shown a trend of steady decrease in those taxes. Not only the business taxes but the corporate tax threshold going up, Mr. Speaker, so that the businesses will get a break before they have to start paying their taxes.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has listened to the people and we are moving in the directions that we need to move in. But we will not move beyond what we can see as sustainable; and that word is vital in our planning. When we look at setting a budget for this province, when we look at tax cuts, when we look at investments, we try and do it in a way — and I think that we have shown that we have been successful in this decade — we try and do it in a way that will be sustainable.

And we have proven that we have been able to sustain and manage the budget of . . . the budgets of this province. And we have once again produced a balanced budget. That budget is based on long-term planning, where we had surpluses in past years, put those into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and now we have been able to draw from that Fiscal Stabilization Fund at times of need.

We thought we would have to draw from it this year. But, Mr. Speaker, due to good planning, hard work, good fortune in oil and mineral developments which we helped encourage, due to a number of industrial growth elements, we have been able to see this province prosper to such an extent this past year that we did not have to draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And that, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the second year of drought that is some of the worst drought in this province's history — despite that, we did not have to draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Next year we project that we will have to draw from that fund but we will not deplete that fund. There will still be money in that fund for the following year.

Sounds something like the dream, the plan — seven years of fat cows, seven years of lean cows. Well maybe we're not looking at seven years, but we are doing the kind of planning that is necessary. When we get a surplus, we don't blow it, we don't send it off to our buddies. What we do is we put that into a fund for a rainy day or a dry day or a difficult day and then we draw on it. And that's exactly the kind of planning that this province needs if it's going to prosper for the future.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we do more planning than that. We invest widely. We invest through our Crown corporations very, very heavily in this province, building the kind of infrastructure that is necessary so that industry can prosper, so there can be safety, so that people can see social and economic growth in Saskatchewan.

We have got second-to-none coverage for high-speed Internet in this province, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because we have SaskTel investing millions and millions and millions of dollars in building that infrastructure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, I worry when I hear the member . . . I worry, I worry, Mr. Speaker, when I hear the members opposite, when they get out in their local papers and their local communities talking about how they're going to sell off the Crowns, because those Crowns have invested in this province and can be such a good tool to help build this province. The employees there are well paid; they've got a good future in those Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

I don't want to ever give those folks, the Sask Party opposition, the opportunity to have the reins of power, to see the kind of misuse that I hear coming from their own papers, their own projections. I don't want to see them take away the foundations that have enabled us to build this province and that will enable us to continue to build this province for the future, Mr. Speaker.

This is a fine budget. It is a budget that projects well. Why? Because we dream big, we plan well, we work hard, and we are building a future that is wide open for all Saskatchewan. I will support this budget, not the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm appreciative to have the opportunity to respond to the budget, but following the Minister of Highways is a hard act to follow. But I'll do my best, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I do agree with that the Minister of Highways said today — a number of times in fact — in his speech is that the NDP government has dreamed well. Well I agree with that, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to respond to that right away.

And I thought rather than give you my opinion, Mr. Speaker, on what I think of the budget, let's go through some of the municipal organizations and representatives with municipal government and what they think of the budget. And we'll see just how well this NDP government and the NDP Finance minister has actually dreamed.

Some of the quotes, Mr. Speaker, and this one, CBC TV — Budget 2003:

Some wonder if . . . Finance minister is overly optimistic by predicting a 6.8 per cent economic growth.

And it goes on to say:

The province is expecting revenue of \$6.2 billion and it's spending \$6.6 billion. The difference is made up from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. It doesn't exist. The public, the opposition, and many members from the backbenches understand that this is nothing more than a line of credit. So when they use money out of this line of credit, the provincial debt increases, Mr. Speaker.

And this quote from the CBC goes on to say:

The debt is up to \$12.2 billion.

That's up nearly a half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's probably the good news because the Finance minister in his dreaming, as the Minister of Highways has said, that this province is going to grow at the rate of 6.8 per cent.

What, Mr. Speaker, happens if he's out by about 3 per cent or 4 per cent, which is more realistic in every other country in other . . . jurisdiction in the world, Mr. Speaker? If that happens, Mr. Speaker, possibly this province will go another \$1 billion in debt if that Finance minister is that far off the mark. So yes, the Minister of Highways say they dream well. I believe they do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other quotes from the mayors and people involved with municipal government — the minister had said that he was amazed at some of their comments. I'm going to give you some of their comments, Mr. Speaker, and I think we would be surprised at some of the people that have made these comments.

Saskatoon TV and CKCK TV after the budget — "Province's city mayors not happy with budget." Trish Cheveldayoff said:

Saskatchewan's 13 city mayors are not happy with the budget. They were looking for \$15 million in additional revenue sharing from the provincial government. They didn't get it and now they say many municipalities are facing a serious budget crunch.

The Minister of Highways made the comment that the cities — the cities like Saskatoon, the cities like Regina — are the economic generators of the province. But the comment from the mayor of Saskatoon, Jim Maddin:

If we are placed in a position of or that of nothing else, I think there's some stuff hitting the fan in this province. Certainly in my city, there's no question about it.

Another reporter talking about SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and their response to the budget, Mr. Speaker.

The government is handing over \$10 million to municipalities. But break that down between SUMA, SARM, and northern communities who are getting 800,000; rural municipal government, 4.3 million; and urban municipalities receive 4.9 million. That will be shared between 450 cities, towns, and villages.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you water that down, over that number of communities, it's a very, very small increase considering the high tax rate that those communities have to deal with.

Regina mayor, Pat Fiacco:

I'm going to recommend this to every taxpayer in this province. When your respective candidate comes knocking on your door, you must ask the question, what is their urban agenda. What will you do for me as a property taxpayer?

Mayor Fiacco was very unhappy with this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Another comment from the Saskatoon mayor, Jim Maddin:

We cannot go back to our municipal taxpayers year after year and demand they pay more taxes.

North Battleford mayor, Wayne Ray, Mr. Speaker:

I just cannot buy it and I am really insulted. So to say that we're angry or disappointed, there's probably other words we could use but it probably couldn't be publicized.

Mike Badham, Mr. Speaker, and I'm surprised at this. Mike Badham's comments are this: this is insulting to the property taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Mike Badham, president of SUMA, Mr. Speaker.

Another one of the quotes from after the budget, Mr. Speaker. It goes on talking about that SUMA disappointing. Mike Badham had another comment:

My colleagues and I have had a chance to briefly analyze . . . (the budget). And two words come to mind. One I think it is insulting and the other one is unfair. Insulting to property taxpayers that have been taking the hit. Through all of the downloading in the 90's, we thought aha, it's time for us to receive some recognition of that and see the infusion of some funding from (the) provincial sources.

It didn't happen, Mr. Speaker.

Wayne Ray, another comment from the North Battleford mayor:

We'll be telling taxpayers when they phone my office (and I quote) here's Mr. Osika's phone number.

Comments like that, Mr. Speaker, go on continuously from municipal representatives. And, Mr. Speaker, that was from the city representatives.

We also have to look at what the town responses are and what

the villages' are. And it was really a replica of what the city mayors said. They feel they've been left out, Mr. Speaker, and they feel that they've been totally ignored by this government, not only in this year's budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but for the last dozen years of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the cities, the towns, and villages are being asked to share \$5 million after continual downloading for the last 12 years.

Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, for an example, the snowstorm that we're seeing in Saskatchewan today will eat up a good portion of that \$5 million that the government saw fit to give the urban municipalities. And then they still have to find a way to balance their books because they're not allowed to run a deficit like the NDP government seems to find that they can run a deficit for the last three years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about RMs (rural municipality) because they're also affected by this budget. And SARM was also not happy with this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, you know, they've been taking hits out in rural Saskatchewan for the last 12 years, but in the last few years it's been a lot larger than it normally was.

Remember back last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a \$25 million education tax rebate. And it was appreciated. It didn't solve the problem out there, but was appreciated. But the government saw fit, once again, to cut that program. And we've saw, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the province of Saskatchewan with the new assessments and the shift in education tax on to the rural taxpayer, and the higher assessments for farm land in this province, the load that farmers are being asked to pick up has got higher, and higher, and higher.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the same time, we have less kids in rural Saskatchewan because the population is dropping because . . . and one of the main reasons is because of this NDP government, and we're being asked at the same time to pick up more of the education tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's time that this NDP government stepped up to the plate and started helping municipalities of all kinds in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to also talk in this budget on agriculture, how this budget affected agriculture because it's so closely tied to what SARM has thought of this budget, and what rural municipalities thought of this budget. And education tax crosses over to both sides of that.

And let's listen to some quotes on agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because no one in agriculture was any happier than the representatives from municipal government.

CBC TV after the budget and they're talking, there's no new money for farmers in today's budget. Art Martin reports that some are wondering where the government's priorities are.

Art Martin reports on a gentleman called Doyle Weibe, who was ready to take notes on the budget but there was little in it for farmers for him to take note of. The same farmer said, well they finally brought up agriculture in the last two minutes and

simply reconfirmed what they'd already announced in the past — nothing new for agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(15:30)

Art Martin, same reporter: the lack of money for agriculture has some people wondering about the NDP government's commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again we see that this government has no commitment to rural Saskatchewan — never has had. And again this year they're showing absolutely no commitment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, quote from Terry Hildebrandt, president of APAS (Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan), and Mr. Hildebrandt goes on to say:

I'm past mad and frustrated. I was expecting at least to bring the budget back to where we were last year, not to lose . . . (I'm) very concerned.

And what he's talking about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the cut of another \$40 million from the agriculture budget.

Here's a budget that in 1990, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was \$1.1 billion in the province of Saskatchewan for agriculture. Where are we now? Well maybe down around 200 to \$240 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But as the farmers in this province are becoming used to, this government has no commitment to agriculture and has no commitment to farm families all over this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another quote from Terry Hildebrandt. And I quote:

They pulled away from the rural again with the support in the budget and sooner or later some administration, and I don't care who it is, will have to start making economic decisions for the betterment of the province and not political decisions as this government seems to make.

Art Martin again, and he talks about that same farmer I talked about before. And I quote:

Doyle said the irony in the provincial budget is the fact that the province has more money from increased oil and gas revenues but those increased revenues mean energy and fertilizer costs are making it more difficult for him to keep farming.

And he's dead on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. His input costs are going up. Fuel, fertilizer, education tax continues to rise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I said, the \$25 million rebate cut last year was dumped right back on the local taxpayer in rural Saskatchewan and they have to pick that up at a time when even the Minister of Highways said . . . seems to realize there was a drought in Saskatchewan.

And the Finance minister today is counting on this year's crop, which isn't even seeded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be a normal crop. Well I would say with a 6.8 per cent growth, it better be a bumper, bumper, bumper crop because it's not going to happen

with anything less, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could go on but as the Minister of Highways said, they dream well — well they do. They dreamt this whole budget up. We know there's a 400 to \$500 million deficit now according to what the Finance minister has said. If his projections do not hold true this province could be going into debt to the tune of maybe \$1 billion this year, Mr. Speaker. If we happen to get a drought again this year and this growth doesn't come anywhere close, this province is going to be in worse shape than it's ever been before.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in the debate today in support of the budget and in opposition to the opposition member's amendment.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to be able to follow the member for Saltcoats because the last person that followed the member for Saltcoats speaking got more votes. So I'm quite pleased that in the next election, hopefully, I'll have more votes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks I would like to just say thank you to the people of Saskatoon Sutherland. This is my first term. I've been very honoured to be able to serve them in this legislature and I take that honour very seriously. I wouldn't be able to do that unless I had the support and love of my family — my wife Karen and my three boys. So I just appreciate their support for us to be able to be here.

And also, Mr. Speaker, being able to be here from a Saskatoon constituency . . . and I know other members from their other constituencies outside of Regina, they are here and they are left their constituency offices back home and we're not able to serve our constituents without the support of our constituency assistants. So I'd like to publicly thank Connie Leopard for all the hard work and support that she provides the constituents of Saskatoon Sutherland. Now Connie worked for three terms for the previous MLA and did an excellent job and I'm hopeful that she'll be able to serve me for three more terms if all goes well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one thing about budgeting, it is your blueprint for the future for the upcoming year. We're able to look back on the past year to see how we did there and look forward to the future year and see what we're going to do.

It's almost like a family, Mr. Speaker. People get together, they have children. And how does the budget help people in that respect, Mr. Deputy Chair?

If you're a pregnant woman and you go . . . you want to have a hospital that is able to give you the prenatal care that you need, you want to make sure that the water that comes out of the tap and the sewer is looked after, our budget deals with those needs and builds on that, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Secondly, when the baby is born they want to make sure that all of the specialization in the medical field is there. In this budget

we show a new Health Sciences Building being built in Saskatoon. More money into capital, more money . . . the largest increase in health care in the history of Saskatchewan, with \$184 million. And 80 million of that comes from the federal government and the good work that Mr. Romanow did as the commissioner in that area. So that family is getting some benefit from this budget in the health care area.

When they take the child home they want to be able to live in a home that is affordable and in this province we have one of the most affordable provinces in all of Canada. They are able to purchase a home, that family. They are able to drive to work in a meaningful safe place, with short commutes. In many cases that family is able to come home for lunch as well. That's a quality of life that many people across Canada are not able to share.

Now that child, when he or she is getting older and the mother or the father, whoever has been the primary caregiver, will want to return to return to the workplace. Well this budget provides more support for that family with subsidized child care. And that is something that is very important in this budget that hasn't been getting a lot of headlines, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Now when that child wants to go to school . . . now maybe he or she doesn't want to go to school but the parents want to have a good education for that child, so they want to make sure that there's good elementary schools and good high schools. This budget gives a dramatic increase in Learning, both in the education with K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) and in the university, in the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) area. There's going to be new schools built, renovated, more money put into the university.

For example, the College Building has been announced by the President MacKinnon that in 2005, for Saskatchewan's birthday, they hope to have the College Building open in time for that. Now I've suggested that perhaps we could have a special sitting of the legislature in the College Building for 2005, perhaps a Throne Speech and a day or two of debate in that College Building.

Now that College Building was started in 1910. It has served the university for decades, 70 years or so. It was closed 10 or 15 years ago because of not being structurally sound. But there have been premiers that have been receiving degrees, honorary degrees; important politicians from all across Canada have spoken there.

In fact, I myself was able to be there when Prime Minister Trudeau spoke, and it was a very impressive speech. He went into a very hostile crowd and didn't back down one little bit. And a lot of things have encouraged me to go into politics but that issue, that day there, helped me to want to go into politics someday.

So universities are very important to the education system of our youth, and this budget provides more money for that.

Now with seniors, they want to be able to have a quality of life that is sustainable, that is beneficial. And the tax reform package, while it does benefit affluent people in my constituency, it also benefits less well-off people even more.

And with regards to seniors, the flat tax is removed, the . . . it is indexed to inflation. And never again will seniors have to scrounge for money to pay for taxes, especially less-affluent seniors. And so there's . . . this budget supports seniors as well, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chair, the opposition doesn't like to talk about this budget as helping people. They like to throw numbers out of the air, that this is somehow a deficit budget, that somehow they don't understand budgeting. I think that they do understand, Mr. Deputy Chair. I think that they are wanting the people to believe something that isn't true.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chair, what happens with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is that they take . . . we take the money in. In a good year we put it into this fund, and then we spend it over the other years.

Now where the opposition is quite critical — and in fairness to them, they are quite right that we don't take that money and put it in a drawer somewhere; we don't put it into a savings account somewhere getting very little interest — what they're being critical of is the cash management.

But because we are following good cash management, we're opening ourselves up to criticism by the Saskatchewan Party. If we had taken that Fiscal Stabilization Fund and put it into . . . The member for Rosthern is chirping from his chair, and it's quite ironic that he does that. If we had taken that Fiscal Stabilization Fund and put it in a bank in Martensville, perhaps even a lock box in Martensville, and not spent it, they wouldn't have a criticism because we could go to that, we . . . Now the member for Rosthern continues to chirp from his chair. But if we had put that money in that savings deposit box three years ago, we could go to that safety deposit box, take it out and plunk it down. It would be real money.

But we haven't done that, Mr. Deputy Chair, because there's no money to be made by putting it in there. We're opening ourselves up to risk. What we've done instead, Mr. Deputy Chair . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Harper): — Order. Order.

If the member from Moose Jaw North and the member from Canora-Pelly wish to have a conversation, they may do so behind the bar.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And I just want to say this about the member from Moose Jaw North. When I first came here three and a half years, I aspired to be just like him. And as the years go by I'm more and more like him . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member from Canora-Pelly says he's getting more and more like him as well.

But getting back to my point about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, is that if we had done that, if we had taken that money and put it in a safety deposit box in Martensville, they wouldn't have a criticism because we could actually go to the bank, take the money, and plunk it down. It would not increase to the debt.

But instead what we did is we took that money and put it into short-term debt, pay off short-term debt. Now we did not on the

books show that the debt had decreased by that amount. Members aren't criticizing that, they know that that's true because when we went back to need that money it was still there, Mr. Deputy Chair. So their criticism — they know that it's not true, they know that it's not true. They've tried to pull one over for the member . . . for the taxpayers of this province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chair, it's ironic that we're having the biggest snowstorm in the long while here because it reminds me . . . It's either NDP precipitation or it's a paraphrase of their Grow Saskatchewan — it's more like snow Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I hear time and again from the opposition that the problem with this government is we're letting the province flounder, that the province is not growing. Well I ask the members opposite, how many of their seats are growing? Most of the seats on this side of the House are growing. Our population is growing under the NDP plan. It's the impediments on the opposition side that is standing in the way of the growth of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this province is growing, Mr. Speaker. We are managing the debt. The debt has gone down however you want to measure it, Mr. Speaker, either by debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio or by debt per population.

(15:45)

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did you know that Saskatchewan has the second lowest or the third lowest debt load per person depending on how you measure it, whether it's per cent of GDP or percentage per population — second lowest. We've gone from one of the worst provinces in Canada to one of the best under our sound management plan, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition doesn't like to hear that. They like to pull out the whole numbers and create this negative attitude in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the opposition also likes to criticize our Crown corporations. Now why is that, Mr. Speaker? Do they honestly think that by selling SaskTel, STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company), SaskPower, SaskEnergy, that this somehow is going to release the pent up demand in this province. I see some members opposite nodding their head.

Now I grew up in the 1980s. And I remember a plan by the government that most of these people on the opposition side voted for. And that is called Fair Share Saskatchewan. Now just to remind members, what Fair Share Saskatchewan was, was to rip, rip families out of the urban centres and . . . (inaudible) . . . them out throughout rural Saskatchewan.

Now I'm born and raised in rural Saskatchewan. It's a wonderful place. I go back all the time. I know what rural Saskatchewan's all about. It's a very good place. But you know, Mr. Speaker, to rip families up and throw them into places — sometimes spouses 400 miles apart from each other — that was the plan of the government that they supported, Mr. Speaker, and they voted for.

Now what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that they know that that

plan won't work. I know why they were doing that. They wanted the tax dollars in the rural communities. They wanted to be able to say to the rural folks, look we're doing this; we've brought economic development; we've moved civil servants into your town.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, they know that that plan will not work this time. So you know what they've come up with? They've come up with fair share Saskatchewan by stealth. Their going to sell off the Crown corporations, sell all that, take that money and spend it like drunken sailors in their constituencies. That's what they're doing. It's fair share Saskatchewan by stealth. This government won't stand for it. I won't stand for it. And the people of Saskatchewan won't stand for it, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chair, one of the things that they don't like to hear about is that Saskatoon is one of the fastest growing cities in all of Canada. It is also one of the most competitive cities in all of Canada.

When you look at the surveys based on education, it is one of the most supportive of education right from kindergarten to grade 12 and into post-secondary and SIAST. That is a situation that the members opposite don't want hear, they don't want to talk about, and they don't believe in because their budget that they would be introducing would be along the lines of Ernie Eaves and Gordon Campbell.

Now what does the Gordon Campbell budget do? They've racked up debt in the billions of dollars. But what do we hear from the opposition? They say, you know, I think Gordon Campbell has it right; I think in the first six months, if elected as a Sask Party government, we're going to do to Saskatchewan what Gordon Campbell did to British Columbia.

Let me give you an illustrated example of what happens under the Gordon Campbell government. Now a family that grew up from my hometown moved to British Columbia. Now they have a child who's in his 50s now who has Down's syndrome, Mr. Deputy Chair. And this young man, now in his 50s, in British Columbia under an NDP government was able to get married, live in the same complex as his mother. And that couple would get up in the morning in their apartment — they would be assisted living — they would take the bus down to a place of employment, do meaningful work, receive a paycheque, take the bus home, visit his mother. And they had a very nice quality of life, Mr. Deputy Chair.

What did Gordon Campbell do to that family? He cancelled the program. He cancelled the bus passes for these people. He made these people go on to welfare. And then he cancelled the work program for these people. So instead of being able to get on the bus and go to work, they now have to sit in the apartment. They're now going to be moved out of that apartment because they can't afford that. That's the plan that Gordon Campbell brought to British Columbia.

That's not the plan that people of Saskatchewan want to have and that's not the plan that this government will have, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Now the member opposite loves to talk about Tommy Douglas.

Now I'm going to tell a story about Tommy Douglas that I just made up. Now the member for Rosthern knows his history, Mr. Speaker, but he also knows selective history. I know what he's talking about. That's the same time period that *Time* Man of the Year was Adolf Hitler. *Time* Man of the Year was Adolf Hitler of that same period. Now I know the members are shocked and appalled.

It's also . . . They're in support of the Iraq war, Mr. Speaker. Donald Rumsfeld was supporting the . . . Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Saddam Hussein has the keys to Detroit, Michigan, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Those members like to read selective history. The members of the public don't buy that. They can read beyond that and they know that the members from the opposition are not to be credible and not to be listened to, Mr. Speaker.

Now I would suggest that the member for Rosthern read all of his history and get past the third chapter and into what really happened because Tommy Douglas was one of the few people that after visiting Germany said, we've got to go in and we've got to support the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now the member for Humboldt is now speaking from her seat. I would suggest that she go back and read her history as well, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chair, unfortunately my time is running out and . . . Although I should say that the member for Moose Jaw North and the member for Canora-Pelly kind of took some of my time, so perhaps I'll be able to get some of the extra time back.

But I guess to conclude, Mr. Speaker, we've got the numbers here. It has been supported by different audit firms. It's been supported by raising the standard credit rating . . . Pardon me, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Nesbitt Burns has said, "Balanced Budgets — No Drought About It." It has passed muster, Mr. Deputy Chair.

The last 10 years, Mr. Deputy Chair, the provincial government, the . . . And this goes largely to the Department of Finance, to their support. They have been prudent. They have been cautious. They have been bang on the number way more times than they've missed. And when they've missed, they've been very close, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Chair.

And so for the members opposite to denigrate — for their own political gain — some sensible, prudent people in the Department of Finance, I think is shameful. And I think they should apologize to those people in the . . . because they're misleading the facts.

Now the member, now the member reminds me of turkey thanking . . . or wanting Thanksgiving to come early. That's what that member seems to be talking for. Now we'll find out . . . And we know where he will be after the next election, Mr. Speaker. It won't be on this side of the House. And I will be, I will be one of the happiest people to have Mr. Lorne Scott back in this legislature on the front benches, Mr. Speaker. That's where that will be.

Now the other thing, Mr. Speaker, since the members of the opposition are gracious in giving me more time, is that . . . let's look at what it means in the member for . . . the member for Weyburn or the member for Estevan.

They come to this legislature — all of them in fact, Mr. Speaker — and they present petitions. They want cell service. They want high-speed Internet. They want less spending in this area, more spending in that area. No debt.

You know, when you add up their plan, Mr. Speaker, the deficit in this province will be skyward. And the only way . . . And I was going to talk about the Ernie Eves situation. There's \$2.2 billion that the Premier of Ontario has to sell to make his debt balance and nobody knows how he's going to do that.

Well the members opposite know where they're going to get the money. It's short-term money — it's selling the Crowns, it's selling SaskTel, it's selling SaskPower, it's selling SaskEnergy. And the province . . . the people in Saskatchewan will not buy that and I don't buy that.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Chair, just to conclude, our future is wide open. The plan that we've laid in place in the last eleven years, the last two years since the current Premier has become Premier, we've reinvested in the environment, we've reinvested in highways, we've reinvested in health care and education.

The Irish model that the opposition likes to talk about, they only talk about the tax cuts. But before the tax cuts, there was investment heavily in education.

This government is investing in education. We are providing tax cuts, sustainable, long-term tax cuts that is going to provide prosperity to this province. And I'm very proud to be part of a government that is being able to do that for the people of Saskatchewan.

Now the members opposite — I will not be supporting their amendment. I will be supporting this budget and this motion because this is the way to a future that is wide open for our children and for their children, for our parents, for our grandparents, and I'm very pleased to stand in this House in support of this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity I guess just to express that I've had some interesting times I guess in the last 12 days that I've been in this Assembly. First of all I'd like to thank the members for welcoming me to the Assembly. And listening to the debate of the Throne Speech as well as the presentation of the budget has given me some opportunity to appreciate the discussion that goes on in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my wife Hazel, my two sons, Christopher and Jonathan, for the support that they have given me through my municipal time that I've spent, the time that I've spent away from my

community and the time that I've spent also away from my family as well. And also the support that they have given me in taking the venture of the political opportunity for representing the Battleford-Cut Knife constituency.

Family, I feel, is very important in the sense of support, as well as being I guess with you at times of need. And I'd just like to go back to I guess speaking a little bit of my relationship with my family and I guess the little bit of background where my family comes from.

My mother came to this country in 1948 and she came from a socialistic environment, realizing that the opportunities in that type of a system really weren't the opportunities that she felt that she could really advance on. And coming into this province, she really felt there was some real opportunity to be able to move and advance her life and marry and have a family in this great province of Saskatchewan.

But she always compared, I guess, that experience where she came from to the experiences that she was having in this province as well. And she likened the East and West Germany to the east and west of Lloydminster, of what is happening in the situation of this province to what she had experienced and the times that she had left in Germany at that time as well.

So it's kind of ironic that we can see that people that have left that type of a situation, looking for better opportunity in a province of Saskatchewan, have come back into realizing that maybe the opportunity isn't here because of the structure of the way the government is working in this province as well.

Talking about the budget and talking about the opportunity within the budget, I guess it's a good news and a bad news budget all at the same time. Thomas Jefferson made a statement saying that a:

Government (can) . . . only do for the people what the people cannot do for themselves.

And I guess when you take a look at the budget, the budget is working in areas that you feel that the people can really look for opportunity for themselves and are needed for the need of the government to be providing, I guess that competition that happens in a structure of the Crowns and the expenditures that are going in the Crowns as well.

One of the big winners in the budget is education. Education has received some \$82 million which is very vital and it's an opportunity that's needed in this province for educating our people in that respect. And I guess we can appreciate that that's a need in this province.

But I guess property, education property, on property tax is a huge problem that we've got in this province and it's been some of that downloading and subsidizing that's been going on for the municipalities back to the provincial government. At one time we had a 60/40 split. That was in support of the municipalities. And now it's a 40/60 split that the municipalities have picked up that cost of education.

(16:00)

The system of providing that cost of education is through the assessment system. And the assessment system seems to be quite unfair in the sense of how that assessment of property is being assessed, as well as how the foundation grant within that education formula recognizes where the dollars are spent in education.

And I have a number of municipalities in the Battleford-Cut Knife constituency that are zero-funded boards at this time as well. And the new dollars that have come into education right now are not going to be recognizing that whole area of need for education. The foundation grant is going to spread those dollars in other parts of the province.

So there is a subsidy that's really being picked up and a subsidization that's being picked up from the municipalities. They're looking after the costs of education that are being provided for the people on the west side of the province as well.

We need a sense of fairness. And if there's a sense of fairness being built in, there's equal opportunity for all people in this province. We need to take a look at the way the education system is structured and the way the education system is funded as well. And I think that is a huge area and a great concern for the Saskatchewan Party which needs to be addressed and changes need to be made.

The other area that the budget spoke to was highways in the sense of the extra dollars going into highways and being spent on highways as well. And highways is a real disaster in this province. It has been something that has been neglected over the last few years. And we've got into a situation where it's been very costly to look after the roadways that we have in this province.

And I could relate to some of the experiences that we have in our constituency. I just had a phone call the other day from a young lady that needs to travel from Macklin to Kerrobert for health care. And she is almost threatened, on a daily basis, needing to travel down Highway 31 in the condition that that highway is in.

The highway was repaired just two or three years in the past but that whole condition of road is all deteriorated already. So you need to question in the fact as to what extent the repair and the maintenance and the upkeep of the roads are really . . . if dollars are really spent wisely there as well.

We have Highway 14 and Highway 29 — that lots of people are referring to those highways as wagon trails. There's ruts and potholes in those highways that already . . . are to the extent that there's only four-wheel drive vehicles that are daring to travel the parts of those roads as well. So highways is a huge concern in the sense of how they're needing to be looked after. And the money needs to be spent in, I guess, a more frugal way to make sure that those roads are dealt with and brought to the condition that needs to be done.

I guess with highways there is also the question if highways . . . if the money is well spent in highways, if we get the federal dollars that come down from highways, how come our highway budget's only increased by \$3 million, when there's \$16 million that's actually gone into that budget from the federal

government?

Health care's another issue that we need to address, and I guess health care becomes a winner in the sense of what's happened with the budget instilling \$175 million into that budget.

But health care comes with federal dollars, and health care comes also with dollars that are being put into that whole area of need without any accountability, without any measurability of the services that are being provided as well. And I guess I can go back to the experience that we've had in our area with the regionalization of our hospital . . . union hospitals as well.

When we took the Wilkie Union Hospital and put it into the district, it was the only hospital in that district that had a three-year accreditation. And it also was the only hospital in that region that was . . . was the facility that had the best accreditation within the building structure as well.

That whole structure of the union district hospital also had a board that was made up of people that were local people, people from the municipality. They were able to secure something in the order of \$1.6 million in surplus, through the . . . I guess their frugal way of running business and operation within that service.

When that whole amalgamation process went through, there was about \$600,000 that was negotiated away from the whole amalgamation process, so there was \$1 million given up from, I guess, the efficiency of running that facility over the years as well. That whole accreditation for that hospital wasn't recognized in the sense that that hospital was turned into a . . . it was lost . . . it had lost its acute care services so it was turned into a health centre as well.

So the accountability, the measurability of efficiency really doesn't seem to be in the system, just this one example. And we spent 42 per cent of the budget for the province which . . . We have a system that doesn't account for the way we spend those dollars and we don't measure if those dollars are spent in an efficient manner as well.

Moving on to agriculture, and I guess agriculture is one of the mainstays in the Battleford-Cut Knife region that we like to take a look at and see what opportunities we have in that entire area. And when we take a look at agriculture — and the budget says that agriculture needs to produce an average crop and that we have a 6.8 per cent GDP that is going to be predicted — and the hat is hung on agriculture and if agriculture doesn't produce, then it's going to be I guess at the demise of agriculture that the budget really doesn't fulfill its fullest needs.

Now we have a sector in agriculture that really has no control over the expenditures and has no control over its income as well. We have the cost of fertilizer that's tripled since last fall, which the producers have absolutely no control on the input costs of their operation. And in the same form, they do not have the control of the income that comes from the crops that they've derived at the end of the year as well.

So if you take \$40 million out of agriculture and then ask agriculture that it's going to give you the strength of being able to produce the 6.8 GDP in your economy, it makes it a pretty

difficult request from a sector that really doesn't have control of how they're going to provide that end result for them as well.

So not supporting agriculture in the sense of having a very strong crop insurance system in place, having a strong stabilization system in place that supports that whole sector, it's very difficult and very unfair for the budget to be looking at agriculture for the one that's going to pull them through the bog at the end of the day.

The Throne Speech spoke about having strong, viable communities and municipalities. It also spoke about communities and municipalities with good infrastructure are the economic drivers of the economy. And I guess when we look at the communities within our province, without having strong communities and not having strong infrastructure within those communities, it becomes very difficult to understand how the economy in the province can really be driven and can be advanced as well.

And I guess when we hear statements like, to be a mayor in the province of Saskatchewan, it's saying that there's never enough — I guess you need to realize what the mayors and the councils of this province have had to have gone through over the last few years with revenue sharing.

When revenue sharing was put into place in 1978, we had \$35.4 million in place at that time. Through those years, that revenue sharing was advanced to \$67 million through '88 to 1990. 1991, revenue sharing was cut to \$62.5 million. At that time the economy of the province was shrinking and things were more difficult in the sense of looking after the costs of operating the municipalities as well as the province. And the premier at that time, Mr. Romanow, had come to the municipalities, asking them to partner up with him, tighten their belts, and asked us to support him in the sense of reducing revenue sharing and finding a way that we could support the economy in the province.

1992, the revenue sharing was decreased to \$53.2 million, something that led to \$50.6 million in 1993 and 45.4 in 1994. All of this through that period of time we had growth within the province. In 1995 and '96, we seen revenue sharing at 46.5 with a surplus of \$574 million in the provincial budget. 1997, they dropped revenue sharing to \$26.9 million, with a surplus of \$557 million.

And the question I guess needs to be asked at that time is if there was partnering and if there was belt tightening being done up through the early '90s, why we weren't sharing some of the gains that were coming through into the later '90s.

I guess when we have statements from SUMA stating that it's unfair and it's unacceptable in respect to not receiving the \$15 million that they'd requested and had sought for, I guess we need to take a look back at some of the advancements that SUMA had made with the government, and some of the discussions that went on at that time as well to see if there was some opportunity for this budget to provide some funding for the municipalities.

There was talk about sharing some of the fuel tax opportunity that might be out there at that time as well. Through that whole

discussion, through that whole discussion it was decided that we needed to take a look if there was any federal monies coming down, if we could not share the 15 cents on fuel tax without any federal money coming through. And the understanding at that time was if there was federal money coming that the fuel tax wasn't an option, that we did need to go there.

And as the federal money came down through this budget, the municipalities didn't realize the \$15 million that was discussed through the many meetings that went on with the mayors and the executive at the SUMA level.

The creation of SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) is another downloading and off-loading that's been done with the provincial government in that respect as well. There has been no increase in the budget this year to the SAMA costs, which their costs are escalating on a year-by-year basis as well.

There was a commitment of 200 officers in 1999 election — promises. There's still a shortfall of 119 of those officers in that respect as well.

Also with the provincial properties that are held within the municipalities, payments in lieu of taxes haven't changed as well. In this budget, that number has stayed the same. So any escalating costs for services provided to provincial properties is again being downloaded and offset to the municipalities in that same respect.

The provincial taxpayers are required to pick up the offsetting of costs and the offsetting of services that are being provided to the needs of the provincial government with properties within those communities as well.

So can we not imagine why the mayors and councils of this community are somewhat upset and somewhat distraught in the sense of not having the opportunity of receiving the dollars that they were somewhat understanding that they should be coming through?

I guess I stand here today stating that I will support the amendment to the budget and also cannot support the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm indeed very pleased this afternoon to have the opportunity to rise in the House and to support the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and not, at the end of the day, support the amendment.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to begin my comments this afternoon by first of all — being that this is my first occasion to speak in the House outside of question period and not have an opportunity to have spoken on the Throne Speech — but to extend my congratulations again to you, sir, for the way in which you conducted the House during the past session and look forward to this session again being a very fruitful exercise for all of us in the Legislative Assembly, sir.

(16:15)

And to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the members who have been elected, the new members who have been elected to the Legislative Assembly. The member from Saskatoon Fairview, Mr. Speaker, who not only was very successful in winning his . . . the seat, but will also make in this Legislative Assembly a tremendous contribution, Mr. Speaker, to the future of Saskatoon and certainly to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And also to the member from Battleford-Cut Knife for his successful victory in that riding. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the member from Battleford-Cut Knife had the opportunity to spend some time working in that riding. And I know that I've heard the Saskatchewan Party on a number of occasions indicate by the large landslide of victory that he won by, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say that as I worked in the constituency, there's something to be said, Mr. Speaker, for the individual. Because there should not be a large solace here by the Saskatchewan Party about their wonderful success there because that had anything to do with the fact that he was a Saskatchewan Party member. Because on many, many of the occasions that I visited the riding, people said, we're voting for the individual; we're voting for the man, Mr. Speaker.

And I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, unequivocally, that the member from Battleford-Cut Knife won a very large number of votes in that riding because of his tremendous work that he's done there. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that that should be not translated in what will happen in the province come the next provincial election because the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, on many, many ridings in this province, will find themselves in a great deal of trouble — including the member who's chirping from Arm River, Mr. Speaker, of what we'll have . . . whose seat we'll have, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I also want to give some recognition, Mr. Speaker, to my constituency because, Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity of serving the constituency for the better part of now 11 years, going on 12. And we have a wonderful group of men and women in our constituency, Mr. Speaker, of whom we work with on a regular basis in not only building our community of Yorkton but also building the region of Saskatchewan on the eastern side of the province of which I represent.

And I want to say that I've been at a number of events just in the last couple of weeks here in the constituency. We just opened, Mr. Speaker, the brand new Catholic high school in our constituency of which we had about 250 people attend. And they recognize the important and the valued contributions that this government has made to education as our budget does again, Mr. Speaker, making a huge investment in the education of our children in Saskatchewan. And I can tell you that my constituency has been the recipient of much of that investment over the last number of years.

And a couple of days ago we were there, opening yet another high school of which people in Saskatchewan and in my constituency are most grateful for the tremendous work that we're doing and investing in children and education in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in a couple of days, or a couple of weeks ago, we

were in our constituency recognizing a number of people who came to Saskatchewan on the fact that a number of individuals went outside the province to encourage people to come and visit us.

And a delegation of people from the REDA and from my Department of Agriculture and Food in that area of the province, and the city, went to Alberta and talked about the advantage of coming to Saskatchewan.

And they visited two communities in that area in Alberta, in Barrhead and in Westlock. And what happened, Mr. Speaker, is through the visit they were able to attract about 20 farm families who were interested in coming and doing business in our community.

And so what they thought they'd do is they'd hold an evening recognizing all the people who have moved to our area of the province in the last 10 . . . or in the last three and a half years, and have an appreciation night for the fact that they've come and settled and invested in our part of the world.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, there were better than 300 people in that room that night — better than 300, of which 44 families have come to an area — if you were to take Yorkton and draw a circle around the city of about 80 miles, or 90 miles — who have come to Saskatchewan from Alberta, and have come to Saskatchewan from Europe.

And what are they doing, Mr. Speaker? They've invested in agriculture; they've bought farm land; they've brought their livestock across. They brought their families into Saskatchewan today, and they're making a successful, decent living in our province and in our side of the province and in our community of which I serve today, Mr. Speaker.

And what a tremendous tribute that was that evening to those individuals. But you know, Mr. Speaker, individual after individual came to the microphone and talked a little bit about the advantage that we have in Saskatchewan.

And they talked about the importance of the environment. And they talked about the fact that they could have access, Mr. Speaker, to pasture land where they could bring livestock and have good forage, Mr. Speaker, and in fact that they had tremendous services — where they said we have good health care services and good education services, good access to our highway systems, and a good water supply system, Mr. Speaker.

And individual after individual talked about the advantages that we have in Saskatchewan and how privileged they were to be there.

And it was interesting that night because Mr. Paul Martin was our guest speaker and Mr. Martin got up and he talked about the Saskatchewan advantage, which often we don't hear on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

In fact we rarely hear on that side of the House about all the wonderful things that are happening in our province because when they have an opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker, they talk about all of the things that they think aren't working in the

province, Mr. Speaker, and never balance it with all of the wonderful kinds of success stories that we've had in Saskatchewan.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Paul Martin said, and I quote; he said, "This part of the province is the tiger of the East," Mr. Speaker. And it's growing and it's developing and it's building. Why? Because of the partnership that exists today between government and the community of Yorkton and the REDAs of the area and of the producers, Mr. Speaker, who are working in that area of Saskatchewan. That's why it's working, Mr. Speaker. Because we have a wonderful partnership today with our province and with those of us who want to do business in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I talk a little bit about my own constituency, I want to add that a couple of . . . about a week and a half ago we had a press conference in our city where there has been now the Downtown Business Association and the city said what we need to have in Yorkton is we need to have a brand new liquor facility, a new liquor store led by, Mr. Speaker, the constituents, led by the business community, and led by the chamber of commerce. And they said, we want you to invest in our city. The business community says, Mr. Speaker, we want you to invest in our Saskatchewan. We want you to invest in our community. We want you to invest in making a difference in our province.

And what does the Saskatchewan Party say, Mr. Speaker? They don't want to see investment in Saskatchewan by the provincial government, Mr. Speaker. They do not want to see investment in our communities.

And as one of the members from behind me says, Mr. Speaker, if they had an opportunity, they would be selling off Saskatchewan asset. They'd be selling it off, Mr. Speaker. They would not be investing in Saskatchewan on a regular basis as this government does, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take some time to talk a little bit about, Mr. Speaker, the agricultural file, because I've been listening intently over the last couple of days here to a number of speeches that were made, and again were made today by the member from Battleford-Cut Knife.

And I make reference to the speech yesterday that was delivered by the member from Indian Head-Milestone, where he said, you know, here we are 25 strong . . . or 25 strong and he goes on to say that they represent the constituencies that are fully impacted by agriculture. And that he sorely disagrees, Mr. Speaker, with my often comments that they are absolutely and completely out of touch with what is happening with agriculture in Saskatchewan.

And I want to point out a number of examples of how that's happened in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and how it really is that the Saskatchewan Party has very little knowledge about what's happening in this particular part of the industry, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to take a moment to talk a little bit about the member from Watrous who took a lot of personal attack yesterday on the Minister of Agriculture. And I want to say to

the member from Watrous today that I know that you represent your entire caucus, you represent your leader, you represent the Saskatchewan Party's view on agriculture, and that you're getting your policy decisions and your recommendations and your positions from . . .

The Speaker: — I would ask the member for Yorkton to make his remarks through the Speaker about whoever it is he wants to talk about.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to say to you that as I read the member from Watrous' notes, Mr. Speaker, I mean she says that in fact she is not a weak member, Mr. Speaker. She said, you know that I've been very preoccupied lately by your . . . that you know, by being able to stand up and say what I do or do not know about agriculture.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not, I'm not for a minute attacking the member from Watrous about what she knows about agriculture because in fact, Mr. Speaker, she's representing her leader. And she's speaking the words of the Saskatchewan Party in terms of what is known about agriculture on that side of the House. I'm not attacking the member from, the member from Watrous.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm supporting the member from Indian Head-Milestone who says we're 25 strong, and here we have the member who's speaking on our behalf, Mr. Speaker.

Well I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I agree with that. She is speaking, Mr. Speaker, for the members opposite all right, on a regular basis. And what does she say, Mr. Speaker? Well she says in her speech, and I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, and she says this, she said that:

The agricultural policy framework, Mr. Speaker, has been shrouded now for some time . . . (where there's lots) of mystery . . .

There's lots of mystery to the agricultural policy framework. Then she goes on and says, there's a lot of misinformation and there are many, many unanswered questions. And then she goes on to say, the minister told the producers that there's a blank cheque. And then she goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that there has not been any designation of money on the agricultural policy framework.

Now that's coming on her behalf, Mr. Speaker, from her leader. Well, Mr. Speaker, for the better part now, Mr. Speaker, for the better part now of eight months, in this province of Saskatchewan on the Internet, on public information, we have provided what the funding under the new agricultural policy framework has been.

And what does the members opposite say? Well we don't know. This has been a mysterious . . . this has been a mystery to us. We have no idea about what the funding is.

The funding has been clearly articulated about what the new policy framework has in it, Mr. Speaker. We know what Saskatchewan's share is. Everybody in Canada knows what Saskatchewan's share is. They know what Alberta's share is and they know what British Columbia's share is and they know

what the Northwest Territories' share is. And that's been public today, Mr. Speaker, for everybody to know for the better part of the last nine months . . . or eight months, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that it's \$300 million, Mr. Speaker, is the federal share. And we know that our share is \$200 million to match that. And we made a commitment in this budget speech, Mr. Speaker, that we'll spend \$1 billion a year for five years and we've made our full commitment, Mr. Speaker.

And the members opposite say, well we have no idea of what the funding is, Mr. Speaker, which is yet another example about 25 men and women who are building agricultural policy, as the member from Indian Head-Milestone says. And he says, we should know all that it is to know. And the member from Watrous stands up and says, you know what, there's some kind of misconception here; we don't know what's going on here.

And that's absolutely right — they don't know what's going on, Mr. Speaker. They have no idea what's going on because even when it's made public, they don't know what the information is, Mr. Speaker.

And then the member opposite gets up and says in her speech, Mr. Speaker, and she says this, she says: so why does the Saskatchewan Party support signing the agreement today? We should sign the agreement, Mr. Speaker, is what she said, and why haven't they signed the agreement way back in June and been in the package way back then?

Well we didn't sign the agreement, Mr. Speaker, way back then because we did not want to lose our benefit on the formula, Mr. Speaker. We were negotiating the 60/40 formula and the Fredericton; we were negotiating it out. Had we signed the Fredericton formula, signed the agreement, Mr. Speaker, way back in July, we would have probably lost the Fredericton formula.

And the member says, you should have signed. And 25 men and women over there said, you know what, you should be signing this agreement. You should be signing this agreement and you should have signed it, Mr. Speaker, because what's happened is you haven't been at the table.

Well we've been at the table the whole time, Mr. Speaker. We've been working with the federal government and the other conservative governments across the country and we have today an agricultural policy framework, Mr. Speaker, of which they say, Mr. Speaker, that they don't like today and they don't want us to sign the interim agreement.

Why don't they want us to sign the interim agreement, Mr. Speaker? Why don't they want us to sign the interim agreement? Well the member from Watrous says, because Ontario doesn't like it. So we shouldn't sign the agreement because Ontario doesn't like it. And I say, Mr. Speaker, Ontario has their own agenda. Not only does she say we shouldn't sign the agreement because Ontario doesn't like it, she says we shouldn't sign the agreement because Mr. Hilstrom doesn't like the agreement.

Now who is Mr. Hilstrom? Well Mr. Hilstrom, Mr. Speaker, and this is what she says about our good friend, Mr. Hilstrom.

And Mr. Hilstrom is the national party I think for the Leader of the Opposition. This is . . . Mr. Hilstrom is the agricultural critic for the Canadian Alliance, Mr. Speaker, and that's who this Mr. Hilstrom is and that's who's providing the agricultural policy I think for the Saskatchewan Party through the Leader of the Opposition.

And this is what the member from Watrous says on behalf of her party. Now this isn't her, Mr. Speaker. We should not for a minute suspect that this is her. This is her representing her leader, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not attacking the member from Watrous. And she goes on to say this, Mr. Speaker: Mr. Hilstrom made a motion in the Standing Committee on Agriculture on March 20 and the motion stated:

That this committee formally request that the Minister of Agriculture delay the implementation of the business risk management pillar of the agriculture policy framework for one year.

(16:30)

And why, Mr. Speaker, would she say that? Well she would say that, Mr. Speaker . . . She would say that, Mr. Speaker, because, because the Canadian Alliance still believes that they're going to make some inroads into Ontario, Mr. Speaker. And they say if we support the Ontario farmer and we support the Ontario government, you know what, we're going to win some seats out there in Eastern Canada and one day we're going to be the Canadian . . . we're going to be the national party.

Mr. Speaker, they have about as much opportunity to form a government in Ottawa as the Saskatchewan Party does to form government in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — They have no opportunity to form government in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now I say to the members opposite on the agricultural policy. I've been meeting for 18 or 19 months with farm groups in Saskatchewan every five or six weeks, with political leaders, Mr. Speaker, in our province. And they've said to me . . . And I've been meeting with the Farm Support Review Committee for all that period of time and you know what, there has been . . . And we met with the other western provinces from Alberta and Manitoba of which our Premier lead that delegation way back in June. And you know what? Everybody said to us, in June and July, do not sign the agricultural policy framework, except who? The Canadian Alliance, Mr. Speaker, and the members right there. They say you should sign the agreement, so that you in fact could disadvantage Saskatchewan producers and you could disadvantage the amount of dollars of which we get to our province, and so we should sign the agreement.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, every time, every time in this province that the Saskatchewan Party gets involved in agricultural policy, it costs the farmers money. On every occasion that it happens, Mr. Speaker, they take money right out of the pockets of farmers, and directly, Mr. Speaker, lose the money.

And I hear the member from Saltcoats chirping and I like when

he chirps, Mr. Speaker, because when he chirps I can go and talk a little bit about him. Because when we were in Ottawa a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, or two years ago, the member said you know what, we don't like this AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) CFIP (Canada Farm Income Program) program. We don't like this program, Mr. Speaker, and what we need to do is we need to get out of this program.

Well you know what? We weren't home, Mr. Speaker, for 20 minutes and the member from Saltcoats had his face on the television set. And he said you know what, we should be taking that money, Mr. Speaker, and we should be running with it. And they took the money, Mr. Speaker. They took the money. And what happened? Saskatchewan and Canadian farmers saw it come out of their jeans, over a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, over that period of time. And that's what that party supports, Mr. Speaker. That's what that party supports.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, in this government, we've been developing a policy with our provincial friends and with, Mr. Speaker, our national counterpart, the federal government. And every political party in Canada sits at the table that's been developing the policy framework. There are Conservative governments, there are Liberal governments, there are New Democratic governments, and you know what? They have a position.

They have a position, Mr. Speaker, and their position is the agricultural policy framework, as a concept, works. And they all have said it should be funded to a larger degree. Except who? APAS has just sent a letter, Mr. Speaker, to the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, or collectively have sent a letter, and said you know what, this is not about the money, this is about the model. And that's exactly what the member from Watrous says on behalf of her party. This is not about the money; this is about the way in which the money is going to get paid out to farmers, Mr. Speaker.

This is about the money. This is about the money. Because you can't build a brand new national program, Mr. Speaker, on \$1.1 billion has been the position of this government and this minister and this Premier, collectively, for the better part of two years. We say you should put more dollars into the framework. That party over there says, Mr. Speaker, this ain't about the money, this is about the model. And I say, Mr. Speaker, as long as that party continues to espouse that kind of language, Saskatchewan farmers will be at a disadvantage on every occasion that they stand up to speak. And I say, do not get involved in agricultural policy, Mr. Speaker, because every time you do it costs Saskatchewan, it costs Saskatchewan producers money. It costs them money, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Today, Mr. Speaker, we have, on an ongoing basis, members standing up on that side of the House and say, you know what, there's less money in the budget for farmers, Mr. Speaker. They say there's less money in the budget for farmers. And I say to the members opposite, farmers in Saskatchewan today are going to get as much and more money than they got last year, Mr. Speaker, in our budget this year. And the Saskatchewan Party shouldn't be going across the country saying you know what, farmers are going to be

disadvantaged this year by this budget because they are not.

The CFIP program, Mr. Speaker, is over. There is no more CFIP program, so the budget reflects that there is no more money in the CFIP program, Mr. Speaker. The budget reflects that we have an indexed, funded crop insurance program in Saskatchewan; that we met all of our commitments to the crop insurance; we've put additional money into the agricultural policy framework, Mr. Speaker. We put money into crop, into the crop forage program, Mr. Speaker. We've put additional money into renewal.

Our budget is fully funded to match every dollar of federal money and more. We're in with more money, Mr. Speaker, than what the federal government has today. And if we do not sign, if we do not sign — and I have not signed and not committed to sign the implementation agreement today, on behalf of this government — but if we do not sign it, you will not have the privilege of the \$25 million, Mr. Speaker, and nor will you have the benefits, Mr. Speaker, today of the enhancements that go with the national branding of the Canadian food structure of which all of the provinces have agreed to sign.

And I say to the members opposite when they say that no other province has signed the implementation agreement, I can tell you that I just came off the phone not more than a half an hour ago with Mr. Vanclief and all of my colleagues, and you know what, 50 per cent of them are already committed to sign the agreement, 50 per cent of them already agreed to sign the agreement.

And I say to the members opposite over there, you need to stop telling people in Saskatchewan today, you need to quit telling people . . . They need to quit telling people in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker, that there is nobody in Saskatchewanland or in Canadaland that's prepared to sign the agreement, because they are.

Before I conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the investment peaks. Because we have a very important differential, and this budget describes it nicely, Mr. Speaker, as to how we invest in Saskatchewan.

That party over there, when it's convenient to them, say you know what, we don't believe in investment, Mr. Speaker, we don't believe in investment and so you should not be investing in a number of industries in Saskatchewan. But you know what, when it's in their backyard you never hear from them.

The member from Canora-Pelly, I never seen him on one occasion, stand up on his feet and say we shouldn't be investing in hog barns in the Rama area, never heard him say it. And you know what, this government has invested in the hog industry in Saskatchewan.

I've never heard the member from Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, stand up on any occasion and say, you know what, we shouldn't be investing in hogs in the Humboldt area. And we're investing with one of the largest hog producers in Saskatchewan in Big Sky. Never heard anybody stand up and do that.

The member from Saltcoats — where they want to build a hog barn in his area and they've have had all kinds of dissention out

there — you know what, you can hardly find him. And I know why you can't find him because Grant Schmidt's got him, Mr. Speaker, that's why you can't find him. And so that's why he's not around anywhere. And I've never heard a word from him on it.

And what did we hear, Mr. Speaker, from the member from Battleford-Cut Knife? The member from Battleford-Cut Knife visited this city, Mr. Speaker, and he had a conversation with our Crown corporate members, Mr. Speaker, and he said, you know what, I need a new swimming pool, Mr. Speaker, in my backyard. I need a new . . . I need a new spa in Wilkie, Saskatchewan, and will the provincial government come and support us, Mr. Speaker? And we said, you know what, we'll take a look at that.

And he said this is a good thing. And he gets elected, Mr. Speaker, in that riding, by saying that I want provincial money and we're going to get provincial money to build a spa in this area. You know what, Mr. Speaker, he got elected on that.

And did they overturn his nomination, Mr. Speaker? Not for a minute they didn't overturn his nomination. They said he could stay as elected member on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. He could support that constituency, unlike what happened to our friend, my friend and my neighbour, Mr. Schmidt.

What happened to him, Mr. Speaker? What happened to Mr. Schmidt? Well what happened to Mr. Schmidt when he has a democratic elected process and he runs there, Mr. Speaker, and says, you know what, I'm going to bring investment to this side of the province and I'm going to participate with the member from Yorkton in building an ethanol plant, of which, Mr. Speaker, by the way, the member from Saltcoats doesn't support.

He doesn't support building an ethanol plant outside of Yorkton. He is on record with his leader and the member from Indian Head — and the member from Indian Head — saying that you know what, we're not interested in putting public money into building ethanol plants in Saskatchewan.

But you know what? Mr. Schmidt's prepared to put money into, into the economy because Mr. Schmidt brought things into Melville when he was in government, Mr. Speaker. And he brought the crop insurance and he brought Babcock & Wilcox to that community. And that's why people support him.

But it's only good to be a Saskatchewan Party member when it's convenient to you, Mr. Speaker. Only when it's convenient to you, Mr. Speaker.

And so when the member from Battleford-Cut Knife says, you know what, it's okay for us to get money from the public. It's okay for us to build a swimming pool. That's okay, Mr. Speaker.

But when we want to build an ethanol plant on the outside, on the outside of Yorkton where you have — and in the Melville constituency, Mr. Speaker — where you can in fact build the economy, where you can grow the economy, where you have more jobs, and you can grow the agricultural industry, Mr. Speaker, what does the Saskatchewan Party say? They say, Mr.

Speaker, that in fact, Mr. Speaker, that we're not prepared to let the nomination stand.

And I say that we've had, in this province in the last couple of months, Mr. Speaker, a very sad occasion. And the sad occasion . . . the sad occasion, Mr. Speaker, in this . . . in this province, Mr. Speaker, we've had a sad occasion, Mr. Speaker. And that is that when we prepare to build an industry and when we're prepared, Mr. Speaker, to build a community in Saskatchewan, we say on this side of the House in our budget, Mr. Speaker, unequivocally, that we're prepared to invest in our economy, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why we're investing, that's why we're investing, Mr. Speaker, in health care. That's why we're investing today the biggest budget in Saskatchewan — \$2.5 billion across the province for Saskatchewan people because we're interested in making sure that we have sound and solid communities, that we have a good health care system, that we could provide the kind of medical services that we need across the province, Mr. Speaker, and that we can have a system today that will grow over time and attract the people who come here, as I made my comments earlier about why people are moving to my part of the community, or my part of the province because they have good health care.

And we're prepared on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, to invest in Saskatchewan and we're doing it in the health care side.

We're prepared to say and we say on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, that we're prepared to invest in education by building schools — by building schools not only in the larger, urban centres, Mr. Speaker, but making investments all over in rural Saskatchewan today, ensuring that's . . . (inaudible) . . . easier access today for young people so that they can get their education closest to home.

This government is about investing in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and making investment in communities.

And I heard the member from Battleford-Cut Knife, Mr. Speaker, talk at length about how it is that municipalities are experiencing some hardship today because they haven't received sufficient financing. I don't think there's any question, Mr. Speaker, that there has . . . needs to be a greater need over time in terms of serving municipalities and funding municipalities in a greater way. Nobody disputes that, Mr. Speaker. But last year we made a \$10 million investment to municipalities — not enough.

And I can argue that I won't have enough money in Agriculture, and the Minister of Health will argue that we should have more money in Health, and somebody will . . . and the minister of Education will argue that we should have more money in Education. We all need to have and would like to have some additional funding over time in each of these files, Mr. Speaker, which is certainly not in our purview today.

And so, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House there is a very definitive difference between who we are and who they are in terms of making investment. And we're going to continue to invest, Mr. Speaker, in growing the economy in spite of the

political differences of which we exercise our privileges today.

And so, Mr. Speaker, today I'm going to be supporting this budget speech because it's about building Saskatchewan. It's about building Saskatchewan, it's about building communities, and it also differentiates very clearly about who we are and who they are.

And Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, when the day comes for us to go to the polls — which will come, Mr. Speaker — they will also make the decision about who should be government for the future. And when the next election is completed, Mr. Speaker, we'll be standing right here on this side of the House governing Saskatchewan people and they'll be sitting right over there, Mr. Speaker, in the chairs that they're in right now.

I'll be supporting the budget, Mr. Speaker, and will not be supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure this afternoon to get up and end today saying a few words in regards to the budget.

Certainly I won't be given the . . . won't have the opportunity — 5 o'clock is coming upon us very soon, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly won't have the opportunity for a half-hour diatribe as we've just heard from the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we heard statements from the Minister of Agriculture, we've heard the member from Yorkton; we've heard statements from the Minister of Highways, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle; and statements from the Deputy Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

What I found amazing, Mr. Speaker, in their comments is not one of those three gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, defended the budget. It's their budget. It's their government's budget and not one of those three gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, could get up and defend it. Instead what they did in their allotted time this afternoon in the debate on the budget is they got up and attacked the Saskatchewan Party because we won't tell them how to run the province.

(16:45)

Well, Mr. Speaker, they're the government. Let them make the decisions on how to run the government. Don't sit over there and ask questions in debate on the budget speech on how the province should be run.

If those three gentlemen are unable to participate in caucus in a meaningful way on how to run this province, maybe what they should be telling, Mr. Speaker, to their Premier, to their leader — the man who has not been elected by the people of this province to be the Premier — they should be telling him it's time to go to the polls because we have run dry of ideas, Mr. Speaker, and it's time for the Saskatchewan Party to be the government in this province. And that's what's going to happen, Mr. Speaker, after the next general election.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of days I've heard comments by some members on the government side of the House, specifically the member from Cumberland and the member from Athabasca, talk about all the good things that could be going on in northern Saskatchewan.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think for the benefit of the House — certainly for the benefit of the New Democratic Party, the governing party in Saskatchewan — there's a statement that I would like to read into the record. I think it is very relevant to this debate. And, Mr. Speaker, this statement is the northern strategy vision statement, obviously a vision statement put together by the Department of Northern Affairs sometime in the past after its creation in 1996. A vision that when you look at it, superficially appears to be a very good vision statement.

But I think when we read the vision statement, Mr. Speaker, it will give us an opportunity to be able to dissect it and take a look at how the government has done so far in being able to use this vision statement to create a strategy, Mr. Speaker. And the vision statement goes as follows, Mr. Speaker:

The people of northern Saskatchewan will possess the means to address the goals and aspirations they have for their communities, their families and themselves. With respect for northern people, their cultures and traditions, Government will work as an active partner with communities, Aboriginal authorities, business and industry to promote the social and economic development of the north.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it seems like a very good vision statement. No one on this side of the House has any qualms about having a very good vision statement. Every organization needs a vision statement to have a starting point; you've got to have that starting point. And from that starting point you've got to put a plan in place. And this is where things start to come apart in a hurry for the government, Mr. Speaker, because there is no plan.

Part of the budget speech leads further to that, Mr. Speaker. And I want to read, as I look back through the budget speech, I want to read a statement that was in there that I think needs to be reiterated again and again:

The 2003-04 action plan was shaped, in part, by the Northern Dialogue Tour led by Premier Calvert in September 2002.

Now we're going to get to the crux of the issue, Mr. Speaker, now we're going to get to the crux. And this leads me back to something that I was very, very disconcerted about when I listened to the member from Athabasca in his speech yesterday talking about northern Saskatchewan.

We have a northern dialogue tour. We're going to talk. We're going to have meetings and we're going to talk. Nowhere did it say we're going to have a northern action tour. It didn't say that, Mr. Speaker.

It says they're going to have a northern dialogue tour after . . . This is their 12th year of government, Mr. Speaker, and they still want to talk to the people of northern Saskatchewan to find

out what their hopes and dreams are for themselves, for their children, and their children's children, Mr. Speaker. They're going to talk.

The member from Athabasca reiterated that again yesterday, Mr. Speaker. And it is very disconcerting, I say again, when he said they're going to talk about health care, they're going to talk about education, they want to talk about infrastructure, they want to talk about economic development. Nowhere did he say in his speech, Mr. Speaker, that they're going to allow anything to happen. They just want to talk about it. They just want to talk — we're going to have a study and talk about stuff.

The people of northern Saskatchewan don't want to talk about stuff, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to have dialogues any more. There are studies galore, adequate studies that are sitting on shelves in this building, in different department — specifically Northern Affairs, Mr. Speaker — that outline very clearly the hopes and dreams of the people of northern Saskatchewan.

So what has this government done with them? They're sitting on shelves — those studies, Mr. Speaker — gathering dust. And then what else do they do? They do one more thing. They're going back up North again to have a dialogue. They want to talk about this issue some more.

This is the 12th year, Mr. Speaker, and they still want to talk about it. After 12 years, if the member from Cumberland still doesn't know, still doesn't know, Mr. Speaker, what the constituents of Cumberland want to have, then I think it's about time that the Premier called an election so that we can get real representation in northern Saskatchewan, who will come to Regina, who know exactly what the people of northern Saskatchewan want, and not need to talk about it any further, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about health care, a few more seats for nursing, Mr. Speaker, for northerners to be able to participate in a nursing program in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, with 30 more seats for nursing for northern Saskatchewan residents and getting to a total of 300 for the province — 300 nursing seats for the province when we're losing nurses at the rate of 500 per year — we're going to be falling a little short.

That is going to put extreme stress, Mr. Speaker, on the people of northern Saskatchewan in trying to provide adequate and quality, quality health care for the people of northern Saskatchewan. How can you have quality health care in this province, Mr. Speaker, and specifically in northern Saskatchewan when you're not keeping up with the nursing seats in this province?

The people of northern Saskatchewan want to participate in these programs, Mr. Speaker. They want to participate.

This government, this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, is restricting the amount of people in northern Saskatchewan who can get into those nursing seats. That, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable. That is the type of colonial government that this province is imposing upon northern Saskatchewan that needs to be ended.

And, Mr. Speaker, that social government will get its comeuppance in the next general election. And the people of northern Saskatchewan will be able to have the quality health care that they are demanding and so rightfully deserve under Saskatchewan's medicare plan.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about education. Talk, I reiterate — talk, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the great downfalls, Mr. Speaker, in trying to provide quality economic opportunities anywhere, anywhere in this province, is that you got to have, you got to have, Mr. Speaker, high-quality educational opportunities in every community in this province.

Now I imagine, Mr. Speaker . . . let's take a look at . . . I'll pick out a single community and then . . . in deference to time here because we're running a little short on time. Let's take the community of La Loche, 90 per cent unemployment, Mr. Speaker — 90 per cent. One of the most dismal unemployment rates in this province, 90 per cent unemployment. The member from Cumberland knows that full well, Mr. Speaker — 90 per cent unemployment in Cumberland House.

So you try to provide quality education for the young people there, but you got to give them hope, Mr. Speaker. You got to give them a reason. You got to give the young people a reason to want to stay in school and to improve their lot in life.

So what is the NDP doing for that, Mr. Speaker? Well, absolutely nothing. They're going to have . . . They're going to talk. We're going to have meetings.

We can look at the budget for Northern Affairs, and what's it going to be? What's the biggest, largest increase in the Northern Affairs budget? Policy development. More policy development. The department has been in place since 1996. There was an Act to create the Department of Northern Affairs and they're still developing policy. They still don't know what they want to do in northern Saskatchewan.

The people of northern Saskatchewan know what needs to happen, Mr. Speaker. The studies have been done. They're sitting on shelves gathering dust, and this province is still . . . wants to have more dialogue and more studies for northern Saskatchewan.

You can have quality education but you've got to have hope that goes with it, Mr. Speaker, and this NDP government is not providing that hope that is so desperately needed in a town like La Loche with 90 per cent unemployment.

Let's stay on this topic just for another few minutes, Mr. Speaker, of the topic of hopelessness — the topic of hopelessness, Mr. Speaker.

One of the members got up and said today, they talked about the spending that the department of community services is going to do in the area of social housing — social housing, Mr. Speaker. That's where the government builds houses for people rather than let people build houses for themselves. Of course it's almost impossible to build a house in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. You're not allowed to own the land, the property that it sits on. So the government builds them houses.

So the government announced that yes, there's going to be spending, there's going to be spending for social housing in northern Saskatchewan. So we look at the budget. You take a look at the budget, and I did that, Mr. Speaker. I looked at the budget under community services. And lo and behold, the municipal housing portion has been cut. It's been cut in a time of rising prices — rising prices.

Mr. Speaker, every year, every year the cost of building a house creeps up marginally. In Saskatchewan it creeps up marginally. So how can you have a cut in a budget for social housing and then announce to the public in Saskatchewan that we're going to build more housing?

Mr. Speaker, how is it that the minister of community services is going to be able to defend himself in this House any further when the minister says we're going to improve, we're going to improve social housing in this province by cutting the budget — we're going to cut the budget?

Well I'll tell you . . . Actually, Mr. Speaker, if these people in northern Saskatchewan had quality jobs, we wouldn't need social housing. And not anywhere in this budget, not anywhere in the Northern Affairs budget, not anywhere in the community services budget is there any, any indication, Mr. Speaker, that they're going to improve the economic conditions of northern Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's getting to be that time of the day. A little more time is going to be needed for me to finish my remarks, and so it'd be probably more appropriate at this time, Mr. Speaker, that I adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
PRESENTING PETITIONS	
Elhard	355
Eagles	355
Wall	355
Allchurch	355
READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS	
Deputy Clerk	355
PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES	
Special Committee on Rules and Procedures	
Deputy Clerk	355
Thomson	355
D’Autremont	356
Hillson	357
Wireless Access to Internet	
Thomson	358
Amendment to Order of Reference for the Special Committee on Regulations	
Thomson	358
Redirection of Committee Business	
Thomson	358
NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS	
Dearborn	358
Hillson	359
Wall	359
Harpauer	359
Wakefield	359
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS	
Eagles	359
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
Sexual Harassment in the Workplace	
Stewart	359
Province Fulfills Commitment to Fix Roads	
Addley	359
Provincial 2A Champions Watrous Wildcats	
Brkich	360
Regional Economic Development Authorities in Saskatchewan	
Iwanchuk	360
Kindersley Students Advance to Canada-Wide Science Fair	
Dearborn	360
Investing in Northern Saskatchewan	
Goulet	361
Regina Public Library Definition Derby	
Julé	361
ORAL QUESTIONS	
Government Reaction to Harassment Allegations	
Julé	361
Crofford	361
Hermanson	362
Cline	363
Calvert	363
SaskTel Investments	
Wall	364
Sonntag	364
Closure of North Battleford Residential Facility	
Hillson	365
Thomson	365
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	
Yates	365
The Speaker	366
SPECIAL ORDER	
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE	

(BUDGET DEBATE)

Weekes	366
Wartman	368
Bjornerud	371
Addley	374
Lorenz	377
Serby	379
Wiberg	385