



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

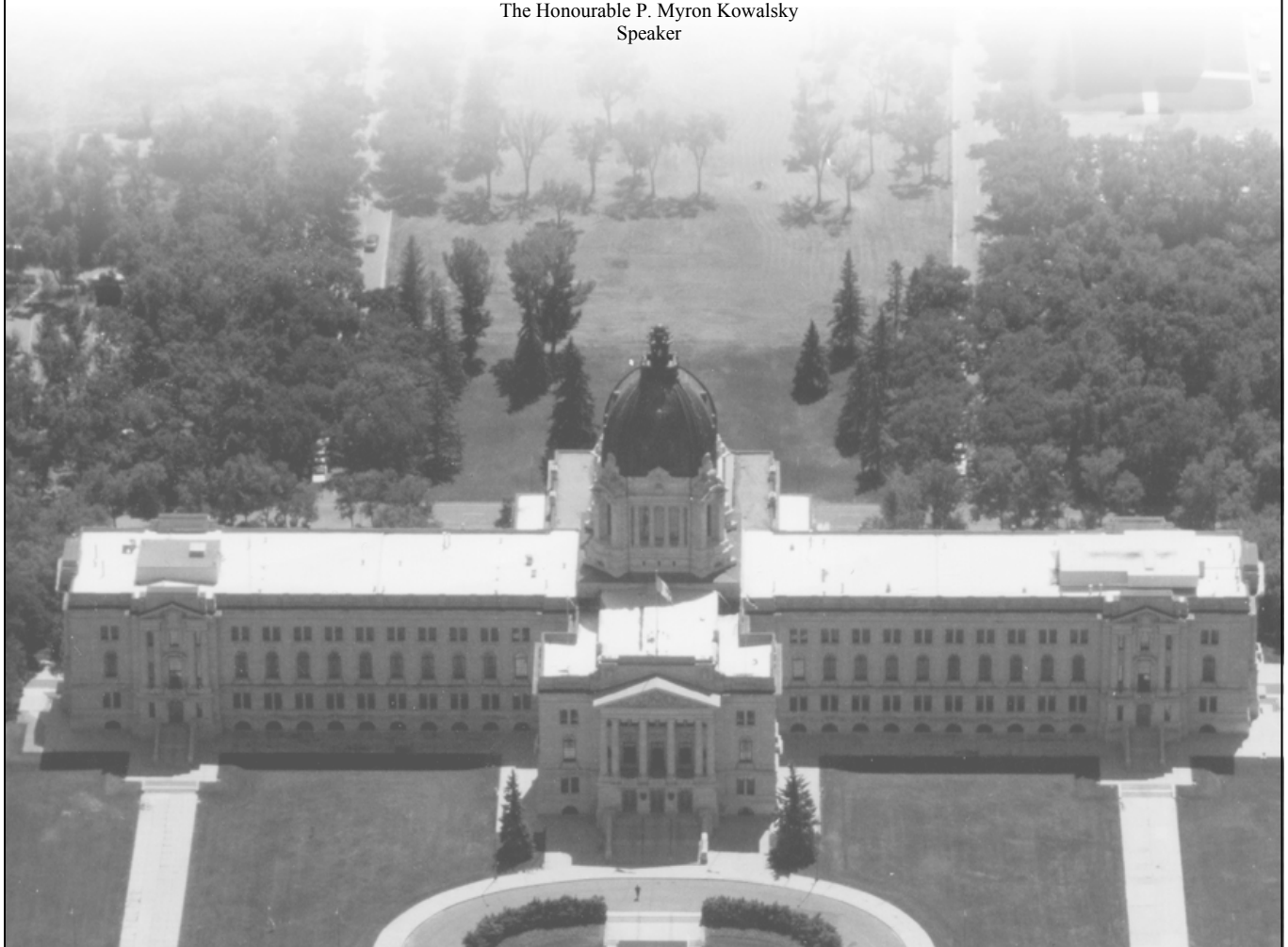
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on a subject that has been brought before this House in previous years. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by producers from the community of Abbey.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise with a petition from citizens in southern Saskatchewan that are extremely concerned about the condition of their highway, and the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 43 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Gravelbourg.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here signed by the good citizens from Davidson, very worried about possible reductions of services at Davidson, Imperial Health Centres:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson, Imperial Health Centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum of 24-hour acute care emergency and doctor services available, as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users

from the Davidson, Imperial areas and beyond.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan. 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 ensure continuation of the current level of services available at the Kindersley Hospital and to ensure the current specialty services are sustained to better serve the people of west central Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Kindersley.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning repairs to Highway No. 43;

A petition praying against the rise in the provincial sales tax in the fiscal year 2004-2005;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 47, 48, 49, 58, 63, and 65.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

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

To the Minister Responsible for Investment Saskatchewan: for fiscal year 2004 and '05, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the cost-of-living allowance percentage, and what will be the total value of the cost-of-living allowance increase?

I also, Mr. Speaker, give notice that I shall ask the question:

Responsible to the minister of Investment Saskatchewan: for the year 2004 and '05, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

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

To the minister responsible for Crown Management Board: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

I have a similar question directed to the minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Crown Management Board: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance in their wages? And further to that, what is the cost-of-living allowance percentage, and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

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

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

I have a similar question for the Minister of SGI dealing with the cost-of-living allowance.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

And I will also be asking that question of the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation, Mr. Speaker.

And while I'm on my feet, I give notice that I shall on day 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving a cost-of-living allowance, COLA, increase in their wages?

And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what will the total value of the COLA increase be?

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

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

To the minister responsible for Finance: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

Mr. Speaker, I will also ask the question of the Minister of Finance on day no. 16 that's stated:

For fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance — that is, COLA — increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

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

To the Premier: in the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in Exec Council will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

In addition, Mr. Speaker:

To the Premier: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in Exec Council will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

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

To the minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of these increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remuneration paid to employees in this department?

On day no. 16 I'll ask the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs:

For the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will receive the COLA increase in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what is the total value of the COLA increase?

I also give notice that on day no. 16 I'll ask the Minister of Community Resources and Employment:

How many incidents have occurred in 2003 where the Community Resources and Employment have removed children or foster children from their homes, these broken down by regions. Of these incidents, how many have resulted in criminal charges being made against a member of the family?

I also have a similar question for 2002 and 2001.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

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

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

Also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Government Relations: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

Also, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister:

For the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and

remunerations paid to the employees in this department?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

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

To the minister responsible for Agriculture and Food and Rural Revitalization: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

And, Mr. Speaker:

For the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 16 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Information Technology: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of these increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

And to the same minister, I direct this question for the fiscal year 2004-2005:

How many employees in this department will be receiving cost of living or COLA increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what is the total value of the COLA increase?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

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

To the minister responsible for Justice: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

Mr. Speaker, I also give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the

government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Justice: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living adjustment increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage, and what will the total value of the COLA increase be?

And I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

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

To the Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Water Corporation: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

And I also ask the following question on day 16:

To the minister of Sask Water Corp: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will the total value of the COLA increase? Thank you.

(13:45)

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions for the Minister of Health as a result of yesterday's budget. I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many long-term care beds will be closed in the fiscal year 2004-2005 in each health authority?

To the minister while I'm on my feet:

How many acute care beds will be eliminated in the fiscal year of 2004 and 2005, in each health authority?

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of these questions that I will table.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

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

For the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those

increases and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have an additional question.

To the minister responsible for Highways and Transportation: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving COLA increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

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

To the minister responsible for Community Resources and Employment: for fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all salaries and remuneration paid to employees in this department?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Community Resources and Employment: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increase in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

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

To the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, a second question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

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

To the minister responsible for the Environment: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all salaries and remuneration paid to employees in this department?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have a similar question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Environment: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving COLA increases in their wages? And further to that what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

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

To the minister responsible for Northern Affairs: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wage? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

Now while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have another question. I give notice on day no. 16, I will ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Northern Affairs: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Member for Arm River-Watrous.

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

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving COLA increases in their wage? And further to that, what is

the COLA percentage of what we . . . the total value of the COLA increase.

While I am on my feet, a similar question to the same minister:

For the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all salaries, remunerations paid to employees in this department?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Member for Biggar.

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

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

And while I'm on my feet:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: for fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to the employees in this department?

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

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

To the minister responsible for Corrections and Public Safety: for fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I give notice that I shall on day no. 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Corrections and Public Safety: for fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will receive cost-of-living allowance, interest . . . increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I

shall on day 16 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Industry and Resources: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many people in his department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in his department?

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Minister . . . or, Mr. Speaker, I have another question:

To the minister responsible for Industry and Resources: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in his department will be receiving cost-of-living allowances increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will that total value of COLA increase be?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

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

To the minister responsible for Culture, Youth and Recreation: for fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases, and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, I'll also be asking:

For fiscal year 2004-2005 how many employees in this department will be receiving cost-of-living allowance increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

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

To the minister responsible for Labour: For the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all salaries and remunerations paid to employees in this department?

I also have another question. I give notice that I shall ask on day no. 16 the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Labour: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will be receiving the cost-of-living allowance increase to their

wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will be the total value of the COLA increase?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have one more question. I give notice that I shall ask on day no. 16 the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: what will the annual savings be to the government for the termination of 500 government workers as announced in the budget delivered March 31, 2004?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for the constituency of Batoche.

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

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Transportation Company: for the fiscal year 2004-2005, how many employees in this department will receive scale increases in their wages? And further to that, what is the total value of those increases and what is the total value of all the salaries and remunerations paid to the employees in this department?

Also I give notice that on day no. 16 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Transportation Company: for the fiscal year 2004 and 2005, how many employees in this department will receive cost-of-living allowances increase in their wages? And further to that, what is the COLA percentage and what will the total value of that COLA increase be.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the House a very good friend of mine from the community of Eastend. I'd like to introduce Jim Fletcher who is in your gallery.

Jim and his wife, Deb, and family moved back from Alberta to the family farm about the same time my wife and I moved to Eastend. We had children about the same age. Our lives have been intertwined as a result of those personal connections over the last 20 years or so and it gives me pleasure to introduce him today.

I might add that he is the author of many quick-witted statements and I shared this with my colleagues this morning. But when Jim heard about the government's added \$160 million expenditure in health care he indicated that he thought that was like throwing good oats after a dead horse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to

you and through you to all members of the legislature, Dave Dutchak, president, and Garry Towler, vice-president, of the Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association. They're sitting in your gallery. And they're people who represent many, many able people who provide care across the province to our Saskatchewan citizens.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Minister of Health in welcoming the representatives to the emergency medical association in Saskatchewan. These gentlemen and their organizations tirelessly respond to emergencies across this province and provide quality care for the many people that they come in contact with. And it's a pleasure to see them in the House, and we welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege to welcome a long-time co-worker of mine, Don Ackerman, to the House today. There's also a very special little intricacy here. He's a constituent of Mark Wartman's — and Mark Wartman also brings greetings — but he is also the proud father of one of our Pages, Donovan Ackerman.

So I'd like to thank Don for coming and welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce in the east gallery a number of students. Thirty grade 8 students from the Winston High School, which is in town of Watrous, have come here to do the proceedings with their teacher, Denise Thoner, and six chaperones. I hope that they will enjoy the proceedings, and I look forward to answering any questions that they have afterwards. And I hope all members will join me in welcoming them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the House . . . People will recognize one of our former Pages, Cam Wensel, and friend in the gallery. And I'll just mention that the whole Wensel family's very talented, and Cam's sister was just nominated in the young women category in the arts for her work in dance in Saskatchewan, so a little more reflected glory on the Wensel family. And thanks for visiting here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Reaction to Budget

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Saskatchewan families found out they can't trust the Premier or his NDP government. They raised the PST (provincial sales tax) by \$135 million just five months after campaigning on a promise to cut taxes.

(14:00)

Yesterday government employees found out they can't trust the Premier and his government and 500 of them paid the price with their jobs, after the Premier railed against cuts to public employees, Mr. Speaker.

And yesterday senior citizens found out they can't trust the Premier, as many seniors will soon pay the price when the NDP (New Democratic Party) closes hospitals and long-term care beds. That doesn't seem to bother the Premier or his Finance minister.

In fact, this morning the Finance minister said he wished Saskatchewan was in the Maritimes — at least that way the NDP budget would look good. Mr. Speaker, in many ways NDP Saskatchewan is behind the Maritimes. After all under the NDP, Saskatchewan already shares many things with our friends in Newfoundland — the worst job creation record, the worst population loss record, the worst economic growth record in Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, in many ways the incompetence of this Premier and his Finance minister and the NDP government has made Saskatchewan a lot like the Maritime provinces. But even Newfoundland has hope for a better future.

Here, losing young people, losing jobs, losing hope is what the NDP have inflicted on Saskatchewan. So I'm guessing even the Maritime provinces wouldn't be anxious to be associated with this Premier, this Finance minister, or anyone in the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Youth Forum on Sustainability

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In some ways, we're getting it right. Imagine high school students, just imagine high school students actually being supported as they work on sustainability issues. And who has a bigger stake in sustainability and the future than high school students?

As I speak, Regina and district high school students are developing ways to make their neighbourhoods, our community, more green and prosperous. These students are participating in Saskatchewan's first youth forum on sustainability. Through the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, students are getting a hands-on approach to identifying issues of

concern. They are creating action plans to address these concerns and gaining skills to become tomorrow's leaders today.

Mr. Speaker, this three-stage forum involves 125 participants — 75 students from Regina and nearby communities. And it brings high school students, teachers, researchers, and local experts together to foster learning and provide students with the opportunity to take action and make a real and lasting difference.

Today students and teachers are working with their local experts to develop action plans. The next stage of the forum will take place in October when they reconvene to share their successes and failures, and the challenges faced. Mr. Speaker, let's recognize and congratulate the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, the experts, and all of the students for their great work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Reaction to Budget

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's newspapers are full of reaction to yesterday's provincial budget. And for most people, the reaction has come down somewhere between shocked and appalled. The headline on *Leader-Post* Ron Petrie's column is, tell me the budget was a joke. Well unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's no joke. What this NDP government has done to the people of Saskatchewan with yesterday's budget is not funny. It's appalling and disgusting, but not funny.

And maybe the worst part in this NDP budget — it's designed to divide urban and rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, setting Saskatchewan families against each other is an old NDP tactic. And at times in the past, it's worked well for the NDP. But this time, the NDP's political divisions has turned out to be an attack on everybody in Saskatchewan.

Here's what the Ag Producers Association of Saskatchewan had to say about yesterday's budget:

With this budget, the government has virtually guaranteed an even tougher year for producers . . . (in) this province . . .

This budget is extremely detrimental to the producers of this province, and will further shrink the economy of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget was an attack on every family in Saskatchewan. And that's why Saskatchewan families will reject this budget, and maybe, sooner or later, will reject this NDP Premier and this NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

The Bannock Shack

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to Regina's Chamber of Commerce, there are about 400 food and beverage establishments in the Queen City. But there's only one that I know of that sells bannock. That's right, Mr. Speaker, Regina is home to its first bannock restaurant, the Bannock Shack. And it's located in the heart of my constituency, Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Bannock is an unleavened flatbread that has served as a staple of the Aboriginal diet for many years. And today it's selling like hotcakes, Mr. Speaker, so to speak. Louis Kenny of the Ochapowace First Nation opened the Bannock Shack late last year. Since November, the restaurant has averaged about \$1,000 a day in sales, and about half of this revenue comes from the sale of bannock alone.

But it's not just the bannock that's attracting customers, Mr. Speaker. What other restaurant in the city offers an Indian soul food menu that includes Kookum's tasty bannock pizza, bullet soup, and Indian tacos? This unique restaurant has not only developed its own following of customers, but it's also helped increase business at neighbouring stores. And the Bannock Shack helps out in the community by donating bannock to feed the hungry with groups like the North Central Family Centre.

Mr. Speaker, many people in my constituency are very proud to have a locally owned First Nations business in the area, and many hope to see more to come.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Mr. Kenny and everyone at the Bannock Shack for their success and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their friendly service and great food. Megweech, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Reaction to Budget

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to young people and those who have returned to Saskatchewan from elsewhere, this NDP budget of betrayal will make their future here either bleak or non-existent. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share some of their reaction. And I quote:

I recently moved back to the province from Alberta to complete my education. With the continued incompetence of the NDP, I will move back as soon as I finish my education.

Here's another, and I quote:

I am one of the employees cut by the Saskatchewan government. I returned from a great job in Alberta a few years ago to serve my home province at a lower salary. I will take my degree and seek gainful employment in Alberta or the USA. This time I won't be coming back.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I quote:

The NDP government which I voted for has betrayed the people of Saskatchewan. I have heard repeatedly the government line that jobs will be created for youth in this province in the public sector. Yet I was working for Saskatchewan Environment; now I find myself unemployed. Tomorrow I leave for BC to look for work.

Mr. Speaker, comments echoing similar concerns abound. Unfortunately, due to the unparliamentary nature of the language used, I cannot share them with the Assembly today.

This NDP budget has now confirmed the travel plan for many of our young people and they are not buying return tickets.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

Reaction to Budget

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan to provide the best health care in Canada, and the people of this province know that this government will keep that commitment even in the face of challenging circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, the budget delivered yesterday is a budget that responds to fiscal realities of this province — a budget that reflects our prudent fiscal management, but not at the expense of vital public services and programs.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have told us that quality health care is their number one priority and health care spending is increasing by 6.3 per cent to almost \$2.7 billion, Mr. Speaker.

This increase will support top public priorities such as expanding MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and CT (computerized tomography) scan services, increasing the capacity of the cancer agency, and an additional \$16 million for the drug plan.

In keeping with our commitment, Mr. Speaker, to young people, education spending will also increase this year by almost 4 per cent to slightly more than \$1.2 billion. This includes \$24 million to capital improvement for K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) schools and \$16 million for post-secondary institutions. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan people have made it clear that health and education are their priorities. This is a sound responsible and balanced budget that delivers on those priorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Reaction to Budget

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after the budget the Premier told CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), and I quote:

There is tremendous hope in our province, tremendous

hope.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what I hope is that after this budget families and businesses won't pick up and leave this province. Unfortunately the reactions tell a different story. Like the quote, Mr. Speaker:

This budget is nothing more than an incentive for many Saskatchewan families to pick up and move. How can anyone say they are attempting to create any kind of welcome business environment with one breath and then announce they're increasing taxes with another. The final result is that at least four people in this province, myself and my family, are leaving.

One more quote, Mr. Speaker:

Two years ago my wife and I decided to come back to Saskatchewan and purchase a business. Since then we have sold our business and intend to either be moving to Alberta or BC. In listening to the budget today, it has only reinforced our decision. Without business you have no economy and yet there has been absolutely nothing in this budget to provide any confidence to business owners to reinvest in this province.

Mr. Speaker, with a budget so devoid of vision and direction, it's no wonder there's a lot of hoping going on. Let's hope it doesn't mean more Saskatchewan families will be leaving our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Effect of Budget on Citizens

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, it's now clear how far this Premier was prepared to go to hold on to his chair. He was prepared to say anything, he was prepared to do anything, and he didn't care who he hurt — just so long as he could cling to power.

For 28 days he looked Saskatchewan voters in the eye and said one thing after another that just wasn't true. He said he would cut taxes and he said would protect civil service jobs. He said he would look after seniors. And now this Premier is raising taxes, firing civil servants, and kicking seniors out of their beds.

Why did this Premier betray Saskatchewan voters?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, some things never change in Saskatchewan — we continue to have a opposition that prefers to dwell on the past, live in the past, fixate on the past. We as a government, however, are entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with the realities of today, moving Saskatchewan forward into the future.

We have identified, I think correctly, the priorities of Saskatchewan people. Those priorities are health, education, support for our young people, also support for vital programs and services in areas such as agriculture. That is what we are doing with this budget, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are cutting public spending in areas with all of the problems that creates. That is why we are raising revenues — because we are firmly committed to those priorities now and will be into the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier ran a despicable and mean-spirited campaign. He knew all along he was going to have to step on Saskatchewan people to get back into that chair. And you know what? He didn't care. For 28 days he told Saskatchewan families he was going to cut their taxes. And he knew all along it wasn't true. But he didn't care, just so long as he got . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. The member's language in his questioning is just sort of bordering on the unparliamentary. It is . . . Order. Order. It is unparliamentary for a member to impute wrongdoings on the part of another member, and I would ask the member to adjust his remarks so that he can express things in this Assembly in a way that he is . . . I'm not asking to limit his freedom of speech but I want to make . . . Order. But I'm asking the member to respect all other members as honourable members and address the issues instead of personalities.

I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll let the people of Saskatchewan take a look at the platform that said it was going to cut taxes, and then I ask the people of Saskatchewan to read yesterday's budget and make their own decision as to what the Premier really said.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, how could the Premier attack Saskatchewan families by raising their taxes after promising to cut their taxes just five months ago? Why did the Premier betray Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I do hope that lots of Saskatchewan people will be watching this exchange in the Legislative Assembly and they will see how out of touch and irrelevant, I guess in some ways, the opposition is, to be dwelling in a period of a history as opposed to dealing with the present and the future, Mr. Speaker.

And I might say that the language that the member uses is the same language that they use no matter what the pretext might

be. They used it in the election campaign, probably used it before the election campaign, use it again. But, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, all of us are elected here to provide leadership for the people of Saskatchewan and deal with the priorities that the people have identified. Those priorities are health, education, support for important areas such as agriculture. That's what they want from us and that's what we should be getting on with, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the member opposite of a comment that was made by this Premier. And I quote from a NewsWatch of January 8, 2004 and it says:

Do you have a mandate to change or raise the PST? The Premier responds, no, no.

That's the response of this Premier, Mr. Speaker. That is not the words that we expected to hear in the budget yesterday. What we heard, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier dropped a bomb on all of Saskatchewan — \$187 million in tax and fee increases. That's \$187 million this Premier is taking out of the pockets of men, women, and children right across this province. But he doesn't care. He was prepared to say whatever it took to trick voters into supporting him.

Mr. Speaker, why did this Premier betray Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, here again we have an example and it's . . . You know, you hate to point these things out and perhaps many people who are watching this, who are faithful watchers, will remember this. But you know, that's the problem with oppositions — that there's never any real consistency. And I guess that's why people become cynical about opposition parties and especially this opposition.

Because it was just some years ago, Mr. Speaker, when this side of the House . . . We had a Finance minister that lowered the PST at that time and provided significant tax relief for the people of Saskatchewan at that time, and lowered the PST from 7 points at that point to 6 per cent. And the reaction from that side is contrasted with now in their over-the-top rhetoric about it being a bomb. Well in those days they said that kind of tax relief was just simply pathetic, Mr. Speaker, and listen to them now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share some over-the-top rhetoric with the Finance minister. And I quote from a NewsWatch document of January 13 where a reporter interrupts the Finance minister, and he says this:

You're saying the NDP didn't talk about raising taxes during the election because it wasn't politically popular. That's outrageous!

The Finance minister responds:

Well maybe it may be outrageous but that's the truth of the matter.

That's the rhetoric that we heard, Mr. Speaker. That's the rhetoric that we heard in his platform. We heard the Premier talking as he travelled across the province. He was going to be the protector of government jobs; he was going to ensure that the workers would be protected.

Well let's look at what happened yesterday. Five hundred workers out of a job, Mr. Speaker. The Premier knew he was going to fire people and for 28 days he ran around this province saying the opposite. Why did the Premier betray government workers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, this is another thing that we have to be wary about when it comes to the opposition is their use of quotations to represent the facts of the matter, because we know from experience that we should examine very carefully when they use quotes and how they're used and what juxtaposition they're used, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again what we are faced with today is the fact that we need to find the resources to support the important priorities that Saskatchewan people have — the important priorities of health care, education, support for our young people, important priorities too in areas such as agriculture, Mr. Speaker, where we have needs and demands in that system, and we need to support that.

That's what we are doing with this budget. That's what we are moving forward with. We're doing this in a sustainable way, Mr. Speaker. That's what the people of Saskatchewan want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's amazing that the Finance minister can stand there and does not recall his own comments of January 13. Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Finance minister I'll read an entire paragraph of the minister. The minister says:

Why don't parties want to talk about tax hikes during elections? I don't know. I suspect that anyone who talks about tax hikes is not likely to be very popular during the course of an election campaign. But again, during the course of the election campaign we were some months removed from the end of the fiscal year and from knowing what our exact financial position is, what the challenges will exactly be during the course of the coming four years. But again the Premier was very clear . . .

You know, Mr. Speaker, that was the government before the election and that was the government that was elected after the election. They didn't know what the true financial picture of this province was? Well I would venture to say that their 6.8 per cent promise that they made last year was a little out to lunch. But, you know, they should have known.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw the Premier take his disguise off. Why did the Premier betray Saskatchewan seniors yesterday?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it appears that the opposition is still fighting the last election campaign and dealing . . .

An Hon. Member: — Can't get over it.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — As the member says, can't get over it.

I remember reading many years ago as a student a book by a psychologist called Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and she identified various stages that one goes through when you experience a loss. And the first, the first stage of that is one of denial. And I believe that the second stage is one of isolation, which they will feel because they're no longer as popular as they thought they were once, prior to the election campaign. And then the next stage is one of anger, Mr. Speaker. And I think we're hearing a lot of anger these days.

But all I can say, and I think what the people of Saskatchewan would say, get real, get responsible, get over it. Start dealing with the issues of the day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's deal with, let's deal with the issues of the day as to how this government reacted yesterday to rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier also launched a vicious and vindictive attack on rural Saskatchewan. He campaigned by saying he would help rural communities. But now that he's safely back in that Premier's chair, he has decided to exact revenge on rural people for not supporting him.

Mr. Speaker, this is the most vindictive, petty, and coldly calculating part of his budget. Rural supporters did not support this Premier so this Premier has decided to make them pay.

Mr. Speaker, we had one rural person tell us, and I quote:

I didn't know they hated us this much.

Mr. Speaker, why has this Premier betrayed rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we made many difficult decisions in arriving at the budget that we have. We cut public spending in many areas of government to support our important priorities and the people's priorities.

One of the areas where we have increased spending . . . are proposed for this year — and hopefully the opposition will support that — is in the area of agriculture where there is an increase over the projected amount last year.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that last year, outside of the budget process, that we added \$130 million to support people in agriculture in Saskatchewan because we know that's the thing that we have to do. And I think everybody in Saskatchewan understands that's what we have to do.

Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to the people of rural Saskatchewan, the people all of Saskatchewan and to reflect the priorities they are telling us that we should be supporting; health, education, and indeed support in an important area such as agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Long-Term Plan for Saskatchewan Future

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the difference between this side and that side of the House is that this side of the House believes that a government can support and understand rural Saskatchewan. It's not a choice between health and education or rural Saskatchewan. They need each other, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, you know at least when Roy Romanow . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. Order. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, at least when Roy Romanow and Janice MacKinnon were bringing in tough budgets in the early 1990s, at least when they did that, Mr. Speaker, there was a plan. There was a plan. It was short-term pain for long-term gain.

But with this new sheriff in town, Mr. Speaker, now, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where it's short-term pain for long-term pain. The message coming from the NDP yesterday was yes, we know this is bad but at least it's going to get much worse, Mr. Speaker. That was the message.

The question to the Premier is this . . . I think we've established that the Premier betrayed those he committed to in the provincial election with his promises. We've established that. What the Premier can do now though is stand up and tell us where is the long-term plan? Where is the hope for the province

of Saskatchewan as a result of that budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It appears that this is one of the things that the people at home will pick up when they watch the legislative proceedings is that sometimes no matter what answer we give, they can't deviate from the script that they have in their questions and so they're not in a position to really absorb the answers.

But let me say again, Mr. Speaker, that not only does our budget contain an increased support for the area of agriculture that's there in our budget, we will continue to provide in the neighbourhood of a quarter of a billion dollars in tax expenditure support for rural agriculture, Mr. Speaker. I think, all totalled, this is in the area of a half a billion dollars.

We need to continue to support this industry in Saskatchewan. This is an industry that has faced very, very difficult times over the last years. This has added budget pressure to our finances. But, Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to the people of Saskatchewan. We remain committed to the people of rural Saskatchewan. We stand behind them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that this Premier had no plan beyond November 5. He had absolutely no plan beyond getting elected, beyond saying whatever he had to say to anybody that he could say it to, to get elected, Mr. Speaker. Beyond the . . .

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

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — For that fact, Mr. Speaker, for the fact that the Premier had no plan beyond getting re-elected, the people of Saskatchewan are now paying the price.

I ask him to take to his feet now, Mr. Speaker, and explain to the people of the province, what is his plan, what is his long-term plan for the future of this province. Does he even believe that we need to grow, that we need more people here in the province. Will he stand up and give us some indication of a plan for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, earlier in this question period the new Leader of the Opposition talked about what's been established. He said, I tell you what's been established, particularly in this question period, is there absolutely no difference, there is absolutely no difference today in the opposition than in the opposition we saw before the general election. Except, except if I may say, Mr. Speaker, under the

leadership of the member from Rosetown, I think the rhetoric was even less agitated.

Now the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, we went to the people with a plan, with a plan for the people of Saskatchewan. That plan has been, has been debated in our Throne Speech, that plan is reflected in our budget, is a plan which says we are going to build a green and prosperous economy in this province. We are going to make this province a place of opportunity for our young people. We are going to provide affordable utilities to the people of Saskatchewan. We are going to build the best possible health care system that we can and we are going to care for the community needs of Saskatchewan. That's our plan, Mr. Speaker, and it's in the budget. And this budget shows a very clear, definite plan on how we are going to do that in a fiscally sustainable manner.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier before question period began, members of the House were reading the numerous e-mails that are coming into various Web sites, media Web sites across the province. And it speaks to these series of questions, Mr. Speaker. Some of the quotes are interesting. Here's one:

They have proved . . . (the NDP have proved) they are incapable of telling the truth . . . My decision to leave the province has now been confirmed.

(14:30)

Another one:

I recently moved back to the province from Alberta to complete my education (but) with the continued incompetence from the NDP I will move back as soon as I've finished my education.

And there are literally dozens of them, just on these pages alone, Mr. Speaker.

And I note — I note — that the Premier did not answer the question. In light of the budget yesterday, in light of the complete omission of any indication that they have a plan for the future of the province, does he or does he not agree that the surest hope for the province is to grow the population, to increase, increase investment activity? Does he believe we need to grow? Yes or no, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The answer to the member's question is absolutely yes. And that is the intention, that is the goal, that is the plan, and that is the direction of this government, with a sustainable, realistic, a practical approach to making that happen, as opposed, Mr. Speaker, to the plan that that member and that party put before the people of Saskatchewan in the fall.

What did that plan say? We're going to grow the Saskatchewan economy by selling off the heritage of Saskatchewan people. That was their plan. We were supposed to grow the Saskatchewan economy by massive, unsustainable tax cuts. That was their plan, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Saskatchewan rejected that plan and they're so embarrassed about it today they don't even have it on their Web site any more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that the Premier was willing to campaign for 28 days and say anything to anybody that would listen to him so he could get his old job back, even if that meant firing the same people that supported him from the jobs in his very government, Mr. Speaker.

But perhaps more damning for the province in the long term is the fact that there is no long-term vision. Yesterday's budget had nothing in it . . . nothing of hope for the future, no plan for the future. At least with Mr. Romanow and Ms. MacKinnon there was a plan and there was a clear goal at the end of the day. That doesn't exist today under this current government, Mr. Speaker.

And the Premier fails to realize that there are more than two options. It's not only about cutting expenses or increasing taxes. We can get our economy growing. That must be the third choice, Mr. Speaker.

Why was the budget devoid of any long-term plan to get our province growing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, oh how the times change. How I recall the comments of those members when the former premier, Roy Romanow, was here; when the former minister of Finance was here. I mean it was the same kind of an attack, the same kind of rhetoric levelled at those two individuals at that time. Nothing changes, Mr. Speaker, nothing changes.

We have laid before the people of Saskatchewan through an election campaign, we've laid it out now in our Throne Speech, it's laid out now in the budget — a plan, a vision for this province. A vision that is practical, that is achievable, a vision that says we are going to build a green and prosperous economy in this province. A vision that says we are going to make this province first choice for our young people, Mr. Speaker. A plan that says we are going to build the best public health care in Canada, that we are going to provide a quality of life in the province of Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan people, and for all of those who will come to our great province, that is second to none in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Members' Support for Budget

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there's one particular e-mail on the CBC Web site that was directed at me actually. It was directed at me so I'd like to share it with members. It says:

In the retail world, they used to call it bait and switch. If the intent of our newly re-elected NDP government was to be the first or best at applying this concept to electoral promises, I'd say they met their target.

The e-mail goes on to say that I should, quote:

Work diligently to unseat this undeserving, deceitful government in the days, if not the hours ahead.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I think that's pretty good advice, Mr. Speaker. Immediately after question period the Saskatchewan Party will introduce a motion of non-confidence in this Assembly for the Government of Saskatchewan betraying the people of this province.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, through you, is there any member over there with the courage to support that motion, to stand up for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure of the exact time frame — it's four or five months ago — we went to the people of Saskatchewan on a confidence, on a confidence question. We asked the people of Saskatchewan in a general election, in a general election, who do you choose? Who do you choose to take this province forward into its great future? And 44.7 per cent of the population of Saskatchewan gave the support to the New Democratic Party, to this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, that's the confidence, that's the confidence upon which we build. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we've had to make some tough and difficult decisions. We've put forward a tough but very practical budget. But what have we heard from the opposition through the Throne Speech and now into the budget speech debate — not one suggestion of an alternative, not one new idea for health care. When asked what they would do in a budget, they have no answers, Mr. Speaker. That is why there is no confidence in this leader or this opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of next week the non-confidence motion will come to a vote, this NDP's budget will come to a vote. That fact that it said one thing in the election and is doing another thing now, the fact that the Premier has done that, that will also come under the scrutiny of this legislature.

It will only pass if every single NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) votes for it. It'll only pass if every single NDP MLA stands in his or her place and betrays the people that voted for them; if every single NDP MLA votes to raise taxes. It'll only happen if every single NDP MLA votes to fire the government employees that worked for them in the campaign. It'll only happen if every NDP MLA decides they will vote to close hospitals and kick seniors out of long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker. That's the only way they will win that vote.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we ask if there is one, even just one NDP MLA over there who will stand up for Saskatchewan, stand up for truth and integrity in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Will any of them stand up for the people of this province when it comes to . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this — every member of this legislature who sits in the government benches will stand up for the people of Saskatchewan.

Stand up for a green and a prosperous economy. Will stand up in this House for building a future for our young people, will stand up for the best public health care that we can build, Mr. Speaker. You bet they'll stand up. But they won't be standing up just to feather their own political futures or their own political nests, as we see across the way, Mr. Speaker.

This government, these NDP MLAs will stand up for the people of Saskatchewan — you can mark my words on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Moose Jaw North on his feet?

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I seek leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw North has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. members for leave. I'll be very brief. I think there's a little extra pressure on the Pages because as I look to the Speaker's gallery, I see that we have not one but two former Pages here. This must be Pages-come-back-tour today.

Joining Mr. Cameron Wensel is also Mr. Luke McWilliams, a former Page here in the House. And I know that we'll also want to welcome him back and wish him well in his current endeavours, and good to have him back. And Pages, you'll have a difficult act to follow because you're following the best.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Good to have you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 15 — The Workers' Compensation Board Pension Implementation Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, The Workers' Compensation Board Pension Implementation Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board that Bill No. 15, The Workers' Compensation Board Pension Implementation Act be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 16 — The Geographic Names Board Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, The Geographic Names Board Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 16, The Geographic Names Board Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Bill No. 17 — The Department of Energy and Mines Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, The Department of Energy and Mines Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No 17, The Department of Energy and Mines Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 25 through 33 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses for questions 25 through to 33 have been submitted.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I would ask leave of the Assembly to move a motion with respect to consideration of interim supply.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked leave of this Assembly to move a motion with respect to interim supply. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the Government House Leader.

MOTION

Deferral of Budget Motion

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, because of changes

in the government's computer system and its ability to track expenditures and the like more quickly than has been the case in the past, we are faced with a circumstance where we will need to move interim supply very quickly in order to meet some obligations.

I've held discussions with members of the opposition in this matter, and I want to recognize and extend our appreciation to the opposition for agreeing and allowing for us to move to interim supply tomorrow. I mean that sincerely. We appreciate their co-operation in this, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I would move:

That on Friday, April 2, 2004, the special order for consideration of the budget motion shall be deferred in order that interim supply resolutions and the related Appropriation Bill may be taken into consideration.

And further that on Monday, April 5, 2004, the debate on the special order for the consideration of the budget motion shall be resumed.

Thank you. And I move that, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina Douglas Park, and seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That on Friday, April 2, 2004, the special order for consideration of the budget motion shall be deferred in order that interim supply resolutions and the related Appropriation Bill may be taken into consideration.

And further that on Monday, April 5, 2004, the debate on the special order for the consideration of the budget motion shall be resumed.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen, seconded by Mr. Hagel, that this Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker. It's again a pleasure to rise and continue with the reply to the budget speech. I had an opportunity yesterday to share opening thoughts on that budget.

And as you heard, Mr. Speaker, and people across this province heard, that we've seen a tremendous reaction by people from all parts of the province. We hear from people in urban Saskatchewan who are very much concerned about the fact that there will be job losses, that there will be closure of long-term care beds, that there will be closure of health facilities and will further bottle up the health services that are currently provided in cities like Yorkton and Regina and Saskatoon.

(14:45)

And, Mr. Speaker, we hear from rural Saskatchewan that rural Saskatchewan has been devastated not only in the fact that the revenue-sharing grant to rural Saskatchewan is very, very small, but the tremendous cuts that have been made to rural Saskatchewan, the job losses, the loss of services, the loss of programs. Those are the kinds of things that we're hearing about.

Mr. Speaker, we're also hearing from people who live in northern Saskatchewan who are very upset with this government for the fact that they betrayed them. They told them one thing during the campaign, and now they're doing the exact opposite. And they have hurt northern Saskatchewan, rural Saskatchewan, and urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of questions have been posed by many individuals in the public, people who want to understand, want to understand the budget, want to know what has changed as far as the way this government reports.

And, Mr. Speaker, I do want to indicate because I've stood in this House for, you know, year on year asking this government to follow the recommendation of the Provincial Auditor who has stated many, many times that the province of Saskatchewan needs to catch up. It needs to change like seven other provinces did in this nation — and the federal government has also followed this type of accounting system — and to move to something that is referred to as summary financial budgeting, where the entire economic picture is presented to the Legislative Assembly. And then not only do we as the elected representatives have an opportunity to look at it, but so do the people of Saskatchewan. They also have that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, so I want to first of all say congratulations to the Finance minister who's kept his word and has ensured that we have moved to summary financial budgeting this year. That was a move that was expected, and he has moved forward.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, it has also brought into light the full economic picture, and we can take a look at where this government has put its priorities, where it has put its plans . . . and in fact to have a better understanding of Crowns.

But, Mr. Speaker, in so doing, the people of Saskatchewan have many questions, and they want to try to understand exactly what are the terms deficit and debt . . . really mean for this province. What are the terms deficit and debt . . . mean for this year, the

fiscal year that we start today? Or for that matter, what did they mean the year-end of March 31, 2004?

Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record a number of quotes. And I want to quote from *Hansard* which is the document that records all of the words of this Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, the quote is from *Hansard*, May 31, 1991, so a number of years ago. And the quote is this:

... if they think they can go to the people of Saskatchewan and say, we need more money, then you ... better clean up your own act first.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that quote is made by the now Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Mr. Speaker, another quote from *Hansard* of April 9, 1990. And I quote:

Well now it all begins, it seems to me, with the simple truth: if you spend more than you bring in, you're going to have a deficit and you're going to have problems.

Hansard April 9, 1990, as I've indicated. The speaker, the current Minister of Finance.

So, Mr. Speaker, those were the ... that was the language that was used by the Premier and the Finance minister back in 1990 and 1991.

Now let's turn to more recent language. Let's turn to language used by the Premier on October 17 of 2003, in Yorkton, Saskatchewan when the Premier released the platform that the NDP campaigned on. And it says this:

It is a platform that provides the room, fiscally, for the ongoing and growing base funding to health and education and other valuable public services.

He said it had the fiscal ability to deal with the promises in health and education. He didn't say that there was going to be an increase in the provincial sales tax or the tobacco tax or the liquor tax or there were going to be hikes to fees. He didn't say that there was going to be a de-indexing of the exemptions of personal income tax.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet a number of times with the executive of the Saskatchewan Government Superannuates Association. And they are lobbying this government to ensure that all superannuates are treated equally, that there is an equitable treatment of them, and that all pensions should be indexed because there are a number of pensions that are not indexed. They are at the whim of the Finance minister as to whether or not there will be indexing.

So, Mr. Speaker, these people were very pleased when they heard that this government had put in place a plan to at least deal with exemptions, deal with the personal exemptions that all of us deal with, and that they would be indexed on a yearly basis to accommodate at least for the cost of living because there's no guarantee that many of those superannuates, in fact, are going to get a cost-of-living increase. But at least there was

going to be a change to the exemption which would technically mean that it would put a couple of dollars back in their pockets.

Now the government opposite in yesterday's budget has said, that's not on any more; it will now be at the whim of the Finance minister whether indexing takes place on exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look to what people consider to be the reality in Saskatchewan. When you look at the province of Alberta and exemptions continue to rise. Mr. Speaker, a personal exemption in the province of Saskatchewan now is well over \$14,000, because it's indexed. It moves up, year after year. Province of Saskatchewan — \$8,000.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think you need to be too much of a mathematician to realize that if you have a \$6,000 difference — 6,000 and change — and you look at the bottom figure in Saskatchewan, the bottom percentage which is 11 per cent, you will be saving an additional \$660 of tax, Alberta versus Saskatchewan, on that simple, low income level.

And that's what people are looking at, Mr. Speaker. They're looking at how can I, how can I survive? How can I continue to grow my family? How can I continue to build? And what this government has done is said, pack your bags, move into your ... get into your vehicle and look for a job elsewhere.

And as we heard today in a lot of the comments that my colleagues introduced in members' statement and in question period, we're hearing from many people that this is, this is the camel ... that this is the straw that has broke the camel's back, if I might. They're ready to move. And they're going to move. Mr. Speaker, we don't need more taxes in this province. We need more taxpayers. And what this government did yesterday is to, is to drive people out of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, on January 8 the Premier was asked, do you have a mandate to change or raise the PST? And he said, no, no. He repeated that word — the word no — twice. That's pretty emphatic, Mr. Speaker. That's to tell people we campaigned on a promise to cut taxes; we campaigned on a promise to support rural Saskatchewan; we campaigned on a promise to ensure that health care would get better; we campaigned on not raising taxes. That was still January 8's story.

And yesterday, what did we see? We saw that entire document, that entire platform that we have been looking at over the last number of days literally fly out the window because it was political rhetoric and they were not going to keep the promises. The Premier had no intention of keeping those promises that he was making during the election campaign. They were there to ensure that he would get re-elected. But they were not there to ensure that they would be kept.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at those two words as I indicated — deficit and debt. Now that we've got the complete summary financial statements, we can compare what the government has put forward for us today versus what is contained in the auditor's report of the last two years.

And I want to share a few numbers, Mr. Speaker, because I think people will have a better opportunity to understand.

According to the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Fred Wendel, in his 2003 Report Volume 2 called *Understanding the Finances of the Government*, Mr. Wendel indicates that for the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 2002 the total deficit of the province for that year of all the economy of the province was \$483 million — clearly a deficit year. For the year ended March 31, 2003 the auditor reports that the deficit was \$654 million.

And, Mr. Speaker, from yesterday's budget, from the Finance minister's own document on page 78, the net debt, he indicates that the net debt for March 31, yesterday, was \$299.8 million, or in other words \$300 million. The projected debt for the year that we are starting today and will end on March 31, 2005 is \$312 million debt and deficits.

Take those four numbers, the last three years and the expected year that we're starting today, Mr. Speaker, and you have a total number that is now a debt for the province of Saskatchewan of \$1.749 billion. One and three-quarters of a billion dollars have been added to the debt of this province since that Premier took that chair four years ago.

Mr. Speaker, that's what the problem is in this province. We hear the Premier say one thing during an election campaign, make promises based on a platform that he had no intentions of keeping, and the end result now is that the debt of this province is larger today than it was in 1991, the overall debt.

Liabilities of this province continue to grow. We now have an opportunity to look at all of the liabilities that are on the books of the government if you like, and that number is huge, Mr. Speaker. We have over \$4 billion of pension liabilities. So when you add in Crown corporation debt and you add in the General Revenue Fund debt and you add in all of the other liabilities, Mr. Speaker, you have a debt that is unbelievably high — \$17 billion according to the document.

And there are some questions about what has been left out in terms of other liabilities that may still be incurred. We recognize that there are lawsuits against the province of Saskatchewan. There are lawsuits dealing with SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) and there are lawsuits dealing with justice issues that may, may, Mr. Speaker, translate into hundreds of millions of dollars worth of settlement. So, Mr. Speaker, we have a province who is moving backwards.

Nineteen quarters of the last 21, this province has had a population drop. We have many times, Mr. Speaker, been indicated . . . it has been indicated that the province of Saskatchewan has the poorest job creation record of all provinces. We heard some comments about the minister wanting to, you know, be closer to Atlantic Canada because we'll, you know, we'll look good. Well, Mr. Speaker, even they beat us in job creation. We are last. And it's time that we need to move forward, Mr. Speaker.

And that's not what we saw in yesterday's budget. We will not see those businesses on the western side of the province who have been struggling to stay afloat with this 6 per cent increase . . . 6 per cent PST, we will not see them survive if the PST is now going to 7. How will they keep those buyers? Well the only way, Mr. Speaker, is you have to reduce the amount of

income that you're going to hope for by at least 7 per cent to compare to purchases made in Alberta, just across the border. That's the only way you're going to survive.

And the markups that this province continues to look at — the increases in telephone rates and power rates and energy rates and all of the vehicle registrations that this province just announced — those are costs that businesses have to pick up. And this government continues to download on them as well.

Mr. Speaker, one of the problems that is going to face a number in my constituency is the uncertainty about the plan around long-term care beds.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the age grouping statistics have been put out as a result of the last election. And it's interesting. I had an opportunity to take a look at age groupings. The document divides the population into six categories: zero to 14 years of age; 15 to 19, etc.; and the last category being 65 plus.

Mr. Speaker, of the population of 978,000 people in Saskatchewan, the percentage of 65 plus . . . And you know, we should play a little trivia game. I should ask you, Mr. Speaker, what do you think that number would be? But I know I can't involve you in the debate, so we'll just pose that to my colleagues and the members opposite. What is the percentage of people in Saskatchewan that are over 65 plus — 14.2 per cent; that's the number of 65 plus.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to take a look at my own constituency, the constituency of Canora-Pelly; the constituency that I live in, which is Kelvington-Wadena; the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats, which are all east central Saskatchewan constituencies. And I had a look at Canora-Pelly. The percentage of 65 plus — 23.6; nine percentage points higher than what is the average in Saskatchewan. In Kelvington-Wadena, 21.9; and in Melville-Saltcoats, 20.7. Mr. Speaker, that area of the province, as many know, we have a tremendously large senior citizen population.

(15:00)

Everyone, everyone knows that the people in their last four years of their lives require 80 per cent of health care dollars. So it's not something that we're going to hide from the, from the rest of the world. We're not going to hide from reality. That's what's going to happen to east central Saskatchewan. We have an older population that is going to require more dollars.

And there is tremendous fear in east central Saskatchewan with this government announcing that they're going to trim the number of long-term care beds. Many seniors are saying we will need those beds. We hope we don't, we hope we don't, but we're going to need them.

This is an attack on the seniors, Mr. Speaker. It is an attack, as I've indicated when we talked about de-indexing the exemption. That's the only thing that the seniors were hopeful for — that at least exemptions would continue to rise so that a few dollars would be left in their pockets to be able to pay for the increases of utility rate costs. And now that has been taken away. So, Mr. Speaker, there's tremendous fear in east central Saskatchewan about what will long-term care bed cuts really mean to that side

of the province.

I had the opportunity to hear from the chief executive officer of Sunrise Health Authority. And, Mr. Speaker, for your benefit and the people of Saskatchewan, Sunrise Authority contains pretty well all of Canora-Pelly and a large chunk of Kelvington-Wadena, Melville-Saltcoats, Yorkton. It's the east central side of the province. And the gentleman has indicated that to remain in a status quo position, to be able to meet the costs of the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) increases, the joint job evaluation, the regular costs that they have no way of changing, the Sunrise Authority would have needed between seven and a half and eight per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the budget and I look at the Sunrise Authority. They had a budget that ended yesterday of 104 million and they've now moved to 108 million — \$4 million which is just under 4 per cent. Mr. Speaker, to stay even, they would have required over \$7 million; they're only going to get four.

There will be cuts in east central Saskatchewan in the Sunrise Health Authority. What cuts are they going to be? Well, Mr. Speaker, for a number of years now the community of Preeceville and district — and I say Preeceville and district, Mr. Speaker, because it is the . . . it involves the communities of Sturgis and Stenen and Hyas and all of those communities stretching north almost to Hudson Bay — they have been lobbying this government for a new health care facility. They need to do a renovation to their current hospital that would move over the long-term care beds, put the two facilities together into a structure that probably is going to be more efficient, it's going to be more cost-effective; but most importantly, it's going to deliver needed care to that group of people who live in that part of the province.

Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, in the fall of 2003, specifically September 19, just as we found out about three weeks before the call of the election, the Minister of Health was in Preeceville. The Minister of Health was in Preeceville to meet with the committee and the minister promises that the today's . . . and I quote again from the *Preeceville Progress* of September 25, and says:

Today's announcement is about moving ahead and building a better future for the people of Preeceville and surrounding area.

That's a quote of the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, ironically the picture in the *Preeceville Progress* that was put in there of the mayor of Preeceville, Mr. Grant See, and the minister and Mr. Joe Kirwan, the CEO (chief executive officer), and Mr. Weber and Mr. Peterson from the board also contained another gentleman. And his name was Brian Rusnak, and he was the candidate for the NDP.

So on September 19, the Minister of Health came to Preeceville to talk about an announcement and he included the candidate for the New Democratic Party in a picture that was not political, as I was told. This was not a political trip. This was to confirm that the government was indeed going forward with the construction of the Preeceville hospital.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've heard from a number of Preeceville residents since yesterday. And what they are asking very clearly is they want this Minister of Health to announce immediately . . . and I say immediately, Mr. Speaker, because they've been asked to put their \$1.6 million into a fund to go ahead with construction. They have it. They're ready to go. They've been ready to go for years and this government continues to delay, make excuses, delay. Come and announce . . . come and announce a project that was already announced before, interestingly enough only three weeks before the election campaign was to begin.

But setting aside all of that, the people of Preeceville and area want this government to indicate immediately that that facility will go ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the estimates of Health contain capital funding for Health. That number is exactly the same as it was in the previous year. But there is a budget for capital expenditure in Health. The Sunrise Authority through to the people of Preeceville, they need to know that this government is committed to building a facility in Preeceville that is needed, that is needed drastically, Mr. Speaker. And I want to ensure those people in Preeceville and area that I will hold the minister accountable for the promises that he made — the promises that he made to ensure that that facility was going to be built.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of concerns that we have had from a lot of different people. We indicate that we were concerned that the budget didn't have any mention of a health sciences centre. And I am going to stay on that topic of health sciences for just a minute.

Mr. Speaker, there is interesting numbers when we look at how people across this nation deal with growth and the ability to attract people. In the province of Alberta, in the city of Edmonton, the region that Edmonton is part of is referred to as the Capital Health Authority. And there is tremendous support for that area, in fact so much so that it has now attracted world-renowned specialists. A heading in the paper said, "Medical specialists lured to Edmonton by high-calibre research, facilities."

And that's the point we've been making. My colleagues from Saskatoon have been making this point for days and days and weeks. Even back in last fall's campaign we said we need a health sciences centre — a centre where we could extend the number of nurse training positions, just for some novel idea; some place where we could be recognized in Western Canada as a facility that would attract specialists and would attract doctors. And that is exactly what's happening in Alberta.

This facility in Edmonton is recognized as being world class. They're luring specialists from Ottawa. They're luring specialists from other cities. And it says, Mr. Speaker, that:

The emergence of Edmonton and Calgary as major medical centres can be attributed in part to the support of a provincial government.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, it's essential that we have a vision. That this NDP who lacks a vision, who lacks a plan, will cause the province of Saskatchewan to take a step backwards. We

needed a plan to say we are moving forward, that we are in fact going to have a health sciences centre. It was going to be state of the art, and it was going to be recognized and draw those people. It's not there.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other concerns of course is, in the area of health, is professionals. And in east central Saskatchewan and Canora-Pelly, there is tremendous concern about the fact that the baby boomer group is nearing the end of retirement. A number of nurses are nearing their retirement, and there is fear that if those nurses retire, there will not be any people, any professionals to take their place. There's a fear that X-ray technologists, lab technologists, as those people retire, will we have the graduates necessary to be able to take their place?

Mr. Speaker, on January 27, 2004 you recall the discussion about the possible construction of an MRI clinic in Saskatoon by a First Nations group. And one of the technologists said MRI machines are not the problem; lack of technologists is the problem. So, Mr. Speaker, I listened yesterday to the fact that the province of Saskatchewan is going to actually look at another MRI machine. And based on numbers, probably that machine is needed.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance . . . I'm sorry, the Minister of Health has responded to me in a question that I posed to him, where he stated that the current MRI machines, the three that we have in the province of Saskatchewan, they're not working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You know, Mr. Speaker, they operate on a 5-5-4 week schedule, that is, 5 days in week one, 5 days in week two, and 4 days in week three. And on average they work about ten and a half hours per day. They're not even working 16 hours, in other words, at least two shifts of 8-hour shifts. Mr. Speaker, what we need — we need to have those machines working at 16/7 at least, if we can't go 24/7. Let's at least go 16/7 and be able to have the MRI machines doing the utmost to ensure that the waiting lists can be reduced.

But what did we do? We haven't talked to Winnipeg where a technologist training program exists and say to the province of Manitoba, we're not going to start a training program here in Saskatchewan, but can we contribute to maybe adding five more spots to the current, I believe, 20 that are enrolled on an annual basis. We haven't done that.

What have we done in the nursing program, Mr. Speaker? I want to share some numbers with you and I . . . and I've indicated that this is a chart that has been prepared on all of the provinces. In 1999 Manitoba graduated 119 nurses, Saskatchewan 147. We're pretty low, both of us, both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The year just past, 2003, Manitoba's graduating 272 and Saskatchewan 145. We didn't move. But Manitoba's already up to 272. And you know, Mr. Speaker, for 2004, the current year, the number of nurses that will graduate in the province of Manitoba is 479 and in the province of Saskatchewan 210, and projected to be 210 for at least the next three more years. Because it's not until this last year, just prior to the election call, that the government has recognized that we need to increase the number of nurse training spots.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's no vision. There's no vision in this budget about how we're going to grow this province, how we're

going to ensure that communities like Preeceville and Canora and Kamsack, who have current health care hospitals, are maintained.

There is a threat out there that the health authorities are going to have to deal with reduced budgets. And as I've indicated to you, there is at least a \$3 million shortfall in the Sunrise Health Authority. How will the Sunrise Health Authority deal with the fact that it is \$3 million short? They're going to cut jobs. They're going to cut facilities. They're going to cut services to people in east central Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not what this government campaigned on in the year 2003.

They did not campaign on cancelling the Conservation Cover Program. You know the Premier stands and he talks about a green economy. I recall the member from Yorkton, the minister of Agriculture, standing and talking about how important it was to have a Conservation Cover Program for the province of Saskatchewan to make sure that we could take some acres out that were currently marginal acres and move them out of grain production and move them into forage production. And that was just an outstanding program.

We poked a little fun at him, Mr. Speaker, because it was a \$15 per acre charge for a maximum of 50 acres, which really was about \$750 per person. But you know what? Some people took advantage of that and we see that there are forage acres out there. But guess what? This government cancelled it. This government cancelled it. No campaigning that it was going to eliminate the Conservation Cover Program.

The farm family opportunities initiative, Mr. Speaker, that this government, you know, touted as being just an excellent program — chopped. No longer in existence.

The livestock and horticultural facilities incentive program — done, gone, chopped out of there.

The farm fuel rebate program, either chopped and . . . when we look at retail, the businesses, or reduced to 80 per cent when we talk about bulk dealers.

The agrologist inspection services, Mr. Speaker, those are also eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, a tremendous amount of closures in rural Saskatchewan — 22 rural service centres are gone. A number of those service centres are in the Canora-Pelly constituency.

Farmers relied on the information that would be provided. People were employed in those service centres. There's no accurate financial account yet of what that closure will mean for communities like Preeceville and Canora and Kamsack, but there are going to be a tremendous loss of income in those cities . . . I'm sorry, in those towns. It will mean that there will be less people there, Mr. Speaker. How do you attract people if you don't have the services in a community that people expect?

(15:15)

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns in my area of course is with provincial parks, Duck Mountain Provincial Park and Good Spirit Provincial Park — two parks. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're

told that the Duck Mountain Provincial Park will be opening on May 20. Excellent. You know, just before the long weekend in May people will be able to go to Duck Mountain Provincial Park. But Good Spirit Provincial Park, it isn't going to open until June 18.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial parks are an essential part of attracting tourism. It is shocking how many people you will see travel to those parks — come from cities, come from Manitoba, come from the United States — to enjoy the scenery, to enjoy our lakes, to enjoy fishing at the Good Spirit Lake. Now they can't even come into the park until June 18.

Mr. Speaker, what is the plan of this government? For saving a few dollars they have now jeopardized the incomes of retail outlets. There are confectioneries, there are gas bars, there are riding stables in these parks across the province that now have to remain closed because there are going to be no attendants taking care of these parks. So people aren't going to take the chance to go to these camps.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I think not only has this budget been very, very negative to workers in this province — those that lost their jobs, to workers who are now having to pay 7 per cent PST, for de-indexing of exemptions — but most importantly I think, Mr. Speaker, the slam in this budget is to the seniors in this province when we look at the burden that we'll put on seniors as health care facilities close, as they have to travel further and further.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Sunrise Authority, Joe Kirwan as the CEO was indicating that they were going to try to expand — I say expand — the services of the dialysis machine in Yorkton. There is a dialysis machine in Yorkton and it's working, but it's not working full-time because they don't have the staff. But they were going to try to expand it because, Mr. Speaker, through the area north of Yorkton — through Canora, Pelly, Arran, Norquay — there are many people who have to have dialysis.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, they have to travel by bus, or they have to travel by having somebody else drive them if they're older, or they drive themselves if they're capable. But you know, Mr. Speaker, they drive right through Yorkton and they go all the way to Regina to get dialysis. So there was, there was a need. And Sunrise Authority was going to try to meet that need by expanding dialysis services in Yorkton.

What will it have meant? It will have meant, I think, greater freedom for seniors — not having to travel for a whole day or two days to Regina to have a dialysis treatment, but be able to do that in Yorkton. But that is not going to be able to happen, Mr. Speaker. This government has not looked at a vision about how to grow this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I took a look at four pages of permit fee increases, four pages in all departments — \$3 for a campfire fee and a \$7 . . . you have to spend \$7 to ask for a big game application fee. Never mind the licence to get it, but you just have to spend \$7 to get the application.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government has placed a tremendous burden on so many people. We've heard from outfitters in our,

in my constituency who are very concerned about the Crown land disposition fees because they have made contracts in outfitting. You plan a year ahead. You know that there are American hunters that will be coming already for next year and you've already locked in a contract. The outfitter will now have to absorb that total fee increase because a deal is a deal, Mr. Speaker, in that kind of business. They're not going to pass those additional costs on to the people that have signed contracts.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, this budget does not meet the plan of this government. It does not meet the plan. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, what it did, what it did is it betrayed the people of Saskatchewan. They made promises. This Premier went around the province and made promises that he had no intentions of keeping. They were just made, as I indicated before . . . political rhetoric for the purpose of getting re-elected. So there is no way, Mr. Speaker, that the official opposition can support a budget like this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the member of Rosetown-Elrose:

That all words after "that" be deleted and the following substituted:

the current Premier and cabinet have betrayed Saskatchewan voters with the 2004-2005 provincial budget and therefore this provincial government does not enjoy the confidence of the Assembly.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Canora-Pelly, and seconded by the member for Rosetown-Elrose . . . it's an amendment to the main motion of the member from Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North. And the motion for the amendment, the wording of the amendment is as follows:

That all the words after "that" be deleted, and the following substituted:

the current Premier and cabinet have betrayed Saskatchewan voters with the 2004-2005 provincial budget and, therefore, this provincial government does not enjoy the confidence of the Assembly.

Debate will continue concurrently on the amendment and on the motion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank . . .

The Speaker: — Order for one minute, the member from Rosetown-Elrose. Why is the member from Moose Jaw North on his feet?

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House to introduce guests, if I may.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say thanks to the hon. member from Rosetown for permitting me to take a moment out of debate to introduce some people who have made a difference in our province.

Earlier this afternoon the Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation spoke in a private member's statement about the youth forum on sustainability that was going on here in town which focused on the ability of young people to make a difference in their society.

And in fact, just a few minutes ago we were talking privately about a presentation that she described to me as awesome. And lo and behold we looked up into the gallery and saw that a teacher from Prince Arthur School and three students who were involved in making that presentation have come to take in proceedings of the Assembly.

Members may be aware that Moose Jaw recently made the decision to become smoke-free, and what you may not be aware of, Mr. Speaker, is that that was an initiative in our community that was started by young people at Prince Arthur School in Moose Jaw, a community school where young people decided they wanted to make a difference, and could make a difference, and got a community to make a big decision.

And I want to . . . I don't know the names of the students who accompanied her but I do recognize Lucy Dalgarno, who is a teacher who is held in high regard in our community and I would simply ask all hon. members to show their appreciation for the interest in the political system. These, I suspect, are politicians of the future and they're certainly politicians of the present and I would ask all hon. members to show them welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Krawetz.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to second the amendment put forward by my hon. colleague, the member for Canora-Pelly. But this is also

my first opportunity to speak in this new legislature, Mr. Speaker, and so I would like to take a few minutes to offer some congratulations and some thank yous.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate you on your re-election as the Speaker of this Assembly. You have the opportunity to serve those of us who are sitting in the chairs on both sides of the House, along with your deputy who is also elected . . . or acclaimed, and we express our thanks to the Deputy Speaker, as well.

I would also like to congratulate the new members on their election to this Assembly. I heard most of the speeches of the new members, at least parts of the speeches, and I was impressed, as other members have mentioned, with the quality of the speeches that were delivered first time in this Assembly. It can be a little bit intimidating for a first-timer. These members are not going to be rookies very long in our midst.

And I was particularly impressed with the five new MLAs that were elected to the Saskatchewan Party official opposition. The quality of their speeches are better than I have heard — either in the federal House of Commons or in this legislature — in my previous political experience and I want to congratulate them on a job especially well done.

When we're doing congratulations and looking at new things, I want to express my congratulations to the new Leader of the Saskatchewan Party — my replacement, my successor. And looking at a man who is younger than myself, who is certainly endowed with a lot of political skills, it probably wouldn't have mattered too much who the leader was prior to his assuming the leadership. He will do a fine job.

But we hope that we've had a bit of a chance to be a mentor and positive influence on the member from Swift Current and we wish him well in this new role that he plays. And we know that he will do it very effectively for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Also I want to join with others in expressing my concern for the member from Yorkton, who I understand watches by television the proceedings in the House. And so if the member from Yorkton is watching now, I want to assure him of my wishes for a speedy recovery and I also want to tell him that . . . He might be surprised to hear me say this but if the member from Yorkton is listening, we really do want you to have a speedy recovery because this House and that government needs him back.

The replacement, the new Minister of Agriculture, has just been a part of the worst budget, the hardest hitting budget on agriculture that I have ever experienced in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I have not often agreed with the member from Yorkton, and I have my differences with the member from Yorkton over his vision for agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan. But that member, that member from Yorkton could not do the damage in 1,000 years that the new

Agriculture minister from Regina Qu'Appelle has done in the first budget that he had a chance to put input into.

Mr. Speaker, I was at a hockey game just up the road in Bethune last night, which is almost in the minister's riding — it's not quite and they're very thankful that it is not part of his riding. But I did not hear one word, I did not hear one word — and there were 1,000 people at that hockey game last night — one word of accommodation for this new Minister of Agriculture. But I heard a lot of things, Mr. Speaker, that I am not permitted by the rules to share in this legislature.

So to the member from Yorkton, please come back soon.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the voters of Rosetown-Elrose for returning me to this legislature. I was awestruck with the support I received from the voters of that constituency, humbled by the fact that I received more votes in Rosetown-Elrose than any other candidate did in the last provincial election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — And I want to thank the 51 . . . 5,173 voters who voted. I even beat the member from Cannington, Mr. Speaker, and that is a feather in my cap, let me tell you. It was close but I did beat the member from Cannington.

And I really sincerely want to thank the people of Rosetown-Elrose who came out in thousands to vote for me. And I want to assure them and all of the people of the Rosetown-Elrose constituency that I hold them in the highest regard and that I will do my best to serve those that I am committed to represent to the best of my ability.

I need to thank my campaign team. Tammy Danychuk and the team of people throughout the Rosetown-Elrose constituency did a fine job, a tremendous job, campaigning in my absence because I could only spend a few days in my own riding. And it is a real tribute to the work that they did to go door to door and talk to just about everyone in the riding. And it certainly paid out, paid with great returns on election day.

I'd like to take this opportunity too to thank my family for their support. Now this last campaign I had the support of my wife to a degree that she hadn't been able to give in past elections because she had been working. But she wasn't working in the last election, and Gail spent hours and hours on the bus going from community to community, city to city, in the province of Saskatchewan. It made the campaign one of the most enjoyable ones for me — just the fact that I was able to have her support and have her by my side. I also appreciate the support of our three children: Ehrin, Byron, and Marlyn. Marlyn was a long ways away in Australia, but she would contact us and let us know that she was pulling for us.

(15:30)

I have to say goodbye as a representative to the people of Biggar. Biggar is a community that hadn't voted much other than NDP for decades and decades. And when I first ran, I think I got about six or seven votes per poll in the community of Biggar. That's back in 1988. But through the years we've built up a very good relationship with that community to the point

that we win the majority of votes in the community of Biggar. And I just want to thank publicly all those fine friends that I have in that community.

I know that they'll be well served by the new MLA for the Biggar constituency, a man that I respect and a man who actually lives right in the midst of his riding in the community of Biggar. I'm sure that the folks in that community will be pleased.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Also, Mr. Speaker, I get to say hello to a bunch of new constituents — at least some of them are new, and some of them we used to represent when we served on the federal level. And I want to say hello again to the people of Eston and Brock, Plenty, Dodsland communities. I'm very pleased to be their representative here in the legislature. Years ago I had the pleasure of serving them in the Parliament of Canada.

And then I have some new, brand new constituents in the areas of Outlook, Broderick, and Glenside. And I look forward to working with these new constituents, the constituents which I've taken away from the member from Arm River-Watrous who used to serve those people and did a fine job of it I might add, Mr. Speaker.

The riding hasn't changed a lot other than in size. We're not so much north and south; we're a little more east and west. We're still a riding that is dependent upon grain, livestock, natural gas production. There's irrigation, small business, recreation and tourism. Just not enough, Mr. Speaker. Like much of Saskatchewan, we need a stronger economy and we will be working toward that end.

I want to speak about the budget. But in a prelude to speaking about the budget, I want to reflect just for a few moments on the election campaign because it was about the fifth one that I've been involved with in my political career. It was very different from some of the other campaigns.

I first ran in 1988. I was green as grass, in my 30s, a little wet behind the ears, ran against a Conservative cabinet minister, Mr. Bill McKnight. It was the free-trade election, and I guess we surprised the people but certainly got beat rather soundly in 1988. And Mr. McKnight was returned to the Parliament of Canada with a rather overwhelming majority of support. But that opportunity . . . And maybe that surprises some of the members of the other side to know that I did a lot of campaigning against Conservatives. In fact I've probably done more campaigning against Conservatives than a lot of they . . . than a lot of they . . . a lot of those people have. But nevertheless, that being said, my appetite was whetted. I enjoyed the political arena and I decided to stay involved.

And then I had the thrill of my first win. It was a big win, back in 1993. It was an election where I received the second highest plurality of votes in all of Saskatchewan second only to Mr. Goodale, who has also had a very illustrious political career here in the province of Saskatchewan. And I was able to serve Saskatchewan at the federal level, something that I enjoyed and appreciated very much.

Then I experienced the uncertainty of redistribution, lost my riding; had to run in a riding that wasn't familiar to me and lost it. And it was an interesting experience because I lost when all of my colleagues around me were winning. And so it was with mixed emotions that I watched the balance come in election night, realizing that we'd put up a good fight but we were going to come short, just seeing all of my colleagues elected in record numbers in the province of Saskatchewan. So there was some happiness in spite of the personal loss.

Again I made a commitment to stay involved in the political arena.

Then came the challenges of 1990 . . . 1998 with a new political party, assuming the leadership of that party, and then a very, a very stunning result in 1999 where we did extremely well. And it was an energizing time in my political career, one of the high points. And we enjoyed very much being the leader of the opposition through the last session of the legislature, and felt that we'd made a positive impact here in the province of Saskatchewan.

2003 — and I will be quite frank, and I've been very open with the people of Saskatchewan, friends and foes . . . political foes alike — we were very disappointed in coming just short of a victory in 2003. It was a different kind of election, different than any other election I'd been involved in prior to this past one.

I was speaking recently with a very well known but not currently elected NDP person. And this fellow came up to me and said he was . . . I could tell he was troubled by the election results. He was troubled with the NDP win. And we chatted for a bit and I told him, quite frankly it was a terrible way to lose an election. But I also said to the NDP gentleman, I don't think it was a very good way to win an election either. And quite frankly, I don't think the NDP did win the election. Even though we didn't win, I don't accept the fact that campaigning the way the NDP campaigned is the way that you really win an election.

Mr. Speaker, let me give . . . They say it's a . . . (inaudible) . . . day so I'll give them some examples. Mr. Speaker, in the Cumberland constituency we had a First Nations candidate campaigning for the Saskatchewan Party. And a tragedy occurred midway through the campaign — his business manager was struck down with a heart attack.

Now I don't believe that the current member for Cumberland had anything to do with that. I don't think that she knew what was going on around her, but the NDP sent some goons into the . . . into our candidate's office and threatened our candidate that he had to stop campaigning immediately because his business manager was struck down with a heart attack. It's the truth, Mr. Speaker — the *Sopranos* don't have anything over on the Saskatchewan NDP and their campaign. It's the truth and it needs to be said. It needs to be put on the record so that the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what those people did to win the 2003 election.

Mr. Speaker, when NDP door knockers knocked on the door and a pregnant woman answered that door they would tell that woman that if the Saskatchewan Party was elected they would

have to pay \$1,500 to have their child. That is not only crude and rude, that's a dangerous thing to do to an expectant mother. Mr. Speaker, it's the truth. The truth hurts but the truth must be told.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP in the last election ran radio ads in northern Saskatchewan in the Cree language saying that the Saskatchewan Party would cancel the treaties. Now, Mr. Speaker, we . . . first of all we know that we can't cancel the treaties. Even if the Saskatchewan Party wanted to, we cannot. We do not have the power. We do not have the authority. Quite frankly, we don't want the power or authority to cancel the treaties and we have no plans to cancel the treaties.

But that didn't matter. The NDP ran false advertising on radio stations in northern communities, trying to frighten people that quite frankly, many of whom are disadvantaged because they don't have enough education. They were taken advantage of by the NDP in a very cruel and unethical way. Mr. Speaker, that was the kind of campaign that we were involved in.

There was much more. There was blatant false advertising. There were billboards that were not true. There were the tasteless and hateful cartoons from the NDP and from some labour unions as well. The list is long.

Mr. Speaker, all of that made me personally sad and disappointed. But now in light of this budget that's come forward, that personal disappointment is much eclipsed by the disappointment and the betrayal felt by the people of Saskatchewan.

You know it wouldn't have mattered so much that we lost the election if the NDP would rise to the occasion, if they would start doing something for the province of Saskatchewan. We can accept that. We know that in the political arena, Mr. Speaker, you win sometimes and you lose sometimes. I can accept that, personally. But I cannot accept the fact that the NDP would betray the people of Saskatchewan — that they would stand on a platform before the election that promised lower taxes, that promised consideration for rural Saskatchewan, that promised to care for people that needed our health care system to work for them.

When it was critical, they promised to be there and, Mr. Speaker, they failed. They failed to live up to those commitments and what we sense from the NDP is that they never even had any intention of living up to those commitments. That's a tragedy. That's a betrayal of the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, it's wrong and for that reason, even though they got more seats, they really did lose the election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed in the Premier of Saskatchewan. He wove a tale, a tall tale during the election that was so far from the truth, Mr. Speaker, that should he have been standing at . . . should he have been Pinnochio and standing at centre field in Taylor Field he couldn't have turned without banging his nose against the goalpost. Mr. Speaker, that's how, that's how bad it was.

He said that he would continue modest tax cuts. We said, Mr. Speaker, that's not possible for up to as long as two years. We said that, first of all we have to get our financial house in order. We were straightforward. All of my colleagues, all of my candidates — urban and rural, north and south — said lookit, first of all we've got to correct the fiscal problems that this province is facing; we cannot continue to run deficit after deficit.

The Premier wouldn't even acknowledge and the NDP wouldn't even acknowledge that there was a deficit. They pretended that there wasn't. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, as a result of their denial, or their betrayal, we now are dealing with a situation — not, not with a budget that's balanced, but with a budget that has a deficit and with higher taxes to boot.

Mr. Speaker, when I signed the taxpayers' pledge promising not to raise taxes if we became the Government of Saskatchewan, the Premier wasn't there. He wouldn't sign his name on a piece of paper and I think that tells a lot about what the NDP's plans were, even during the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the interview that the Premier did with CBC television, with Costa Maragos, just last night. And this has to do with the PST increase. He said the provincial sales tax, even with the increase, the average family that 50,000 . . . Pardon me. The provincial sales tax, even with the increase, the average family at that \$50,000 will pay about \$904 over the course of a year provincial sales tax. And then he says something very telling. He says, that same family in Alberta will be paying more than \$1,000, almost \$1,100 for a health care premium.

You know, accidentally, the Premier told the truth. He said that family will be paying a health care premium in Alberta, and we've got the evidence. In 24 hours many families are planning to leave Saskatchewan because of this budget, move to Alberta, and in fact they will be paying a health care premium. But at least, Mr. Speaker, they'll be getting health care. At least, Mr. Speaker, if they need an MRI, they won't die in the interim.

Mr. Speaker, that is a tragedy. Those people should be staying in Saskatchewan. They want to live here. I've talked to thousands of them, people that are planning to leave Saskatchewan and move to Alberta. They don't want to go. They want to stay in this province. They love this province. But they feel like they're being pushed out of Saskatchewan by an NDP government that's insensitive and mismanaging the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP said they were committed to balanced budgets. On page 78 of the summary of the budget, the budget and performance plan summary, is a line that the Finance minister's own officials told us we should watch very carefully. He said this is a new system, these summary financial statements — something that we agree with by the way — but he said there's one line, there's a couple of lines that you should keep an eye on. You should keep an eye on what the net debt is of the province of Saskatchewan. And the minister's own officials said, watch what the decrease or increase in the net debt is.

And so I got this copy of the budget and I looked at the line —

decrease or, brackets, increase in net debt. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the brackets are there. So when the brackets are there, that means there's an increase in the net debt. The increase in the net debt for this current budget is \$312.1 million.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are putting the province of Saskatchewan further at risk. They are loading our youth with more debt if they stay in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, they are robbing our children and our grandchildren of their future to the tune, according to their own document, of \$312.1 million.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is not acceptable; it's not acceptable to the official opposition. According to the election platform of the NDP, they said it wasn't acceptable to them. But of course it didn't mean a lot, as we're finding out, what the NDP said during their campaign.

The NDP said that they would shorten waiting lists and waiting times; they failed to do that. They committed to reducing the property tax burden on the people of Saskatchewan; they failed to do that. I read very closely the budget, Mr. Speaker, and there is no plan to reduce property taxes.

(15:45)

During the election campaign they said yes, there is an imbalance; we have to deal with that problem. The Boughen Commission has reported . . . or when it reports, we will deal with that. Mr. Speaker, the Boughen Commission has reported since the election and the government has failed to act.

Also there is the problem of no plan for growth which the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party has very capably addressed. And then finally, there is the attack on rural Saskatchewan and agriculture in particular.

I want to read from the NDP's own Web site. This is a news release on the NDP Web site. It's still on their Web site. It's dated October 30, and it was in conjunction with the Premier's visit to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool convention, a convention that I also outlined the Saskatchewan Party's position on agricultural matters. And this news release, which is still on the NDP Web site, says that New Democrats are committed to providing rural residents with the lowest cost package of basic utilities in Canada. Mr. Speaker, they failed.

Rural Saskatchewan, or anyone in Saskatchewan, does not have the lowest cost for utilities in all of Canada. We're not even that close; quite frankly, we're in about the middle of the pack.

And what's even worse is that I have a golf course in my constituency. They can only get one telephone line, Mr. Speaker. Not only don't they have the lowest basket of utilities in all of Canada, it would cost them to get a second line in. Even though the lines are ploughed right through the ground, right past the club house at the Saskatchewan Landing, it costs about \$17,000 to get a second line.

Mr. Speaker, not only don't we have the lowest basket of utility rates, but we don't have service to boot, Mr. Speaker, from this NDP government.

Second point in the NDP news release on agriculture:

reducing property tax pressures by increasing provincial revenue-sharing grants and infrastructure funding to (municipalities) . . . and rebalancing property tax and provincial funding of K-12 education.

Another broken promise, Mr. Speaker.

They go on to say in their news release that they will be continuing to provide:

. . . more than \$500 million each year in programs and tax exemptions for Saskatchewan's agriculture industry, including strong crop insurance and risk-management programs.

That's absolutely false. I heard the Minister of Finance say that over five years he's hoping to get \$1 billion into agriculture. Well that's \$200 million a year according to my math. But yet the NDP Web site said that they were going to put \$500 million per year into agriculture, and that they were going to have strong crop insurance. But we've seen crop insurance weakened with higher premiums and lower coverage. So they've struck out twice just on that one bullet.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier says, and there's quotes around this statement:

With respect to education funding through property taxes, we have said the status quo is not on . . .

Again the NDP misled the people of Saskatchewan.

And finally, farther down,

SGI will continue to provide auto insurance rates that are among the lowest in Canada.

And in this budget we saw auto insurance increased, and particularly for agriculture, for rural residents, some very, very traumatic increases on the insurance costs for registering farm trucks to haul grain.

Mr. Speaker, in their rural policy they talk about building and renovating schools, health facilities, training more nurses and rural doctors. Mr. Speaker, this budget is a betrayal of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if there is one person in Saskatchewan that should be resigning for failure to serve the people of Saskatchewan it is the new Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks, and he answers his questions in question period, talking about a green and prosperous economy for Saskatchewan. Well all the facts indicate that we have a red and a dying economy — that's under this NDP government and their plan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close, I want to close by talking a bit about equalization payments. The Premier, the Finance minister has talked about the unfairness of the equalization formula. And the Saskatchewan Party recognizes that. In fact, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party has said that if the official opposition can co-operate in putting pressure on Ottawa to fix that

equalization formula, we're happy to do that. The Leader of the Opposition has spoken out in favour of correcting the equalization formula.

Now this all came to light by the way, Mr. Speaker, when Professor Courchene did his paper outlining the inequities of the system and how it disadvantages the province of Saskatchewan. I don't know why the NDP government, I don't know why the Premier or the Finance Minister weren't able to give us this information and defend the province of Saskatchewan. I'm not sure why we had to depend on a professor from out of province to do it. But nevertheless it didn't happen until this professor spoke out on the issue.

But there's a very telling paragraph or two in Professor Courchene's report that I want to read into the record because it tells us that even fixing the equalization formula is not the entire solution for Saskatchewan's economic and fiscal problems. Professor Courchene says, and I quote from page nine of his report:

What is disturbing about these data (at least from Saskatchewan's vantage point) is that the province's non-energy equalization entitlements are rising at a much faster pace than . . . those for any other have-not province. The increase in non-energy entitlements over the same time frame (1995-96 to 2000-01) is 66 per cent for Saskatchewan, compared with 22 per cent for Manitoba, for example, or 15 per cent for Newfoundland. While Saskatchewan's non-energy entitlements in 1995-96 were about \$150 million less than those for New Brunswick, by 2000-01, they were about the same. There is a more straightforward way to make this same point: (Mr. Speaker — and I ask every member of the House to please note this) *Saskatchewan is becoming poorer*, relative to the other provinces. Indeed, this was the essence of a recent paper by Global Insight's Dale Orr (2003), in which he noted that although Saskatchewan ranks somewhere in the middle in terms of provincial per capita GDP, it has dropped to the bottom rank in terms of per capita personal disposable income.

What Mr. Courchene is saying is that even if you forget the equalization formula and even if you don't look at the problems that the strong energy sector is imposing on the province's finances, the province of Saskatchewan economically is going backwards. It has been going backwards since 1995-96 to the point where, if oil and gas revenues diminish we will become . . . we will not receive the benefit that we should, and we will become a more handicapped province, more dependent on equalization payments than we've ever been.

Mr. Speaker, there is no reason why Saskatchewan should be a have-not province. There is absolutely no reason, in looking at all of the resources that every province in Canada has, that we should be anywhere near the bottom half. Whether you have a group of five or a group of ten provinces that you base your average upon, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan should be a have province.

I cannot support this budget because it is not good for the people of Rosetown-Elrose. It is not good for agriculture. It is not good for those who depend on the health care system. It is

not good for those who have to pay a large percentage of their income for the necessities of life and now have an extra per cent of PST to pay for those necessities.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is bad for the people that I represent. It's not just bad; it's a nightmare for the people that I represent. It's shaken them to the core. They are questioning whether or not they should stay in the province of Saskatchewan. I'm not talking about a few disgruntled folks, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about vast numbers of good, solid people in this province, people who have contributed much to our province and are absolutely dismayed at the betrayal that they have been placed under by this NDP government and by the Finance minister and the Premier of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan should do so much better. Saskatchewan should be such a strong province rather than a weak province. We should be looked up to by the other members of Confederation rather than laughed at like we are.

Mr. Speaker, as I looked at the submissions to the CBC yesterday in response to the budget, it broke my heart. It broke my heart to say . . . to read about people who had come back to Saskatchewan. I guess the one that broke my heart the most was the person who said that they came back in 1999 because that's when we had the . . . (inaudible) . . . success in the election and almost won. And they said, we thought things were going to be different in Saskatchewan. We came back full of hope and enthusiasm.

Mr. Speaker, I think the whole province sensed that there was change coming. And then to see that person devastated by this budget to the point where they said, we made a mistake in 1999 and we're going to head back to . . . I don't know if it was British Columbia or Alberta, I don't have it in front of me. That's a tragedy. It's not a tragedy because it's a statistic. It's a tragedy because it's a human being of Saskatchewan.

Whenever somebody that loves a province feels that the government is driving them from the province they love, that's a tragedy. That's a tragedy that should sink into some of the thick heads over on the other side because, Mr. Speaker, they have a duty under our democratic system to do better than they've done. They have a duty to be more honest and more diligent. They have a duty. They have a duty to provide good government to the people of Saskatchewan, and they have failed and failed miserably.

The most dismal example of their failure is the budget that was delivered yesterday. And that's why I support the amendment and will not be supporting the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to have an opportunity to get up and speak to this budget.

I did not have an opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to make a few comments about my constituency which I have had the privilege of serving for one full term and was re-elected again to serve: the constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this constituency is predominantly urban constituency with a portion of it that is rural. And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the people put their trust in me.

There's a part of me, Mr. Speaker, that would like to talk about some of the things that went on during the election campaign, but I think it's very important to put that behind us. Mr. Speaker, suffice it to say that I think the last speaker gave all the examples of why the opposition Sask Party did not get elected just by the way he spoke and the way he was acting.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, how much I appreciate the support of my family as well — my wife Gail, my children Alaina and Daniel who have been there throughout all of this time, the additional time that it has taken in this last few months to get on board as Minister of Agriculture. They have been there fully supporting me. And I have to say that also extends to my extended family from whom I have received many good wishes. I have received prayers on my behalf, and I'm thankful to them for that.

Mr. Speaker, this budget helps put before the people of this province a clear picture of where this government is moving — a government that is grounded fully in building a future for this province; a green and prosperous economy that will be here, that will continue to grow for all the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was appointed Minister of Highways and Transportation back in 2001, and I enjoyed the work as Minister of Highways and Transportation. And we had a plan there that we were putting into effect, and that plan continues. It is to make sure that we build the corridors that will provide for economic growth in this province. We heard lots of noise from around the province, Mr. Speaker, but we focused on those areas that would help to build this province, that would help to make it strong and give us a good, solid economy. And, Mr. Speaker, that is going very well. We continue to provide good budgets that will continue to build this province's infrastructure and our highways.

Mr. Speaker, I had intended to be able to carry on in that work, but unfortunately my friend and colleague from Yorkton was struck with cancer . . . very, very difficult time for he and his family, but for all of us as well who know him and love him. And he knows that he has been receiving our prayers and our best wishes through this time. And I know that's come from members across the way as well.

Mr. Speaker, as minister of Agriculture, he did yeoman service. He worked hard for the people of this province, for the producers of this province. He made sure that when there was need, that the funding was there. And he was backed by this government, Mr. Speaker, by all the members of this

government in those actions. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because we care about the whole of this province and that includes rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — So, Mr. Speaker, our minister of Agriculture did yeoman service through this past year, a year of unprecedented difficulty, Mr. Speaker . . .

(16:00)

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say at this time that on my behalf I wish the member from Yorkton, our Deputy Premier, a speedy recovery, all the best, and I want him to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. I would wish that the members would take a hint. The floor now was been given to the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think during the last speech, the speech of the former leader of the opposition, members on this side showed a fair bit of respect. There were times when there were comments made, but the continual harangue from the other side at this point really, really is unnecessary. But I guess it's going to continue on, Mr. Speaker, so I'll just try and speak over top of it.

Mr. Speaker, our province faces a very difficult fiscal environment at this time, and there have been many things that have contributed to that. We all know that. As we've lived in this province, we've seen what BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) has done. The closure of the borders has had a devastating impact.

The Minister of Finance made clear that outside of budget last year we added an additional \$130 million to the budget to help support our farm families and our producers and our rural economy, Mr. Speaker. That \$130 million carried people through a very, very difficult time. Not only did we do that, Mr. Speaker, but we worked with the federal government to make sure that there was funding on every front to meet those needs. We pressured them when they needed pressure. We worked with them when they were prepared to work with us. But we made sure that the support was there for our rural Saskatchewan families.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this year, we realize that polling has made very clear that for the people of this province — whether they be urban, rural; whether they're farmers, Mr. Speaker — the priority is health care. Polling made that very, very clear.

And so when we were drafting the budget this year, we made sure that the bulk of that funding that we were putting in, Mr. Speaker, went towards health care. And that funding for health care is going to provide for a new MRI for Regina. That new MRI is going to enable us to do much more in terms of diagnosing illness and enabling us to deal with the waiting lists

and move people forward so that they can get the best of possible treatment.

We know that health care is essential in this province, that we have to put a lot of our effort, a lot of our work into making sure that people get the best possible health care they can.

But I also want to talk about some of the other factors that have influenced our fiscal environment, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about a federal government that has not come to the table in the ways that they should have been at the table — not at all, Mr. Speaker. A federal government that . . . while we were building the economy in Saskatchewan, while we were building and while we were making an environment so that oil and gas companies would come in and do the work, Mr. Speaker, what was the federal government doing? For every dollar that we were taking out, they were taking \$1.08, \$1.25 and robbing this province.

And then their federal minister, their federal minister says, oh here's a one-time \$120 million, as if that's good. He was handing back the money they stole from this province. Mr. Speaker, this province has been robbed by a federal government on this front, and they had better come to the table and do it right. This country was built in a way that should have meant equity for all the provinces.

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. We'll just provide a little time for members to kind of settle down and relax a little bit. And I ask the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley to resume his remarks.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find myself very frustrated when I see these actions by the federal government. I also find myself very frustrated by the federal government when I see what they've done to health care in this nation.

And I hope they come to the table. All we've got so far in general has been talk about putting money into sustainable program. I am hoping that they will come to the table and that they will do what's right on fiscal . . . on equalization and that they will do what is right with regard to health care in this nation and move from their 16 cents to the 25 cents that former Premier Romanow has recommended.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about some of the comments that I've heard over the last while. I want to say clearly, I know that when I was appointed Agriculture minister it was probably a shock to a lot of people — I want to say not the least of whom was myself. I'm probably the first urban Agriculture minister that we've had in this province, and I am humbled by that reality. But I was also a little shocked, as were some of my friends.

The first Sunday in church after the appointment, Mr. Speaker, I was sitting in church. One of my friends, one of my friends turned around in church, and he said to me, look Mark, I know you're not from the farm; my brother and I are, and if we can offer you any help at all, Mr. Speaker . . . He said to me, if we can offer you any help at all, Mark, just ask us.

And I said, well you know I'm trying to get an understanding of

some of the things that are going on right now, some of the crisis issues, and I'm wondering if you could tell me what do you know about anaplasmosis. He said, well I think I dated her once. I said, thanks for that help, thanks for that help. What about blue tongue? Can you tell me about that? And he said, oh yeah, that's when the Tories open their mouth and start talking.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I thought with that kind of help I'm going to be in real trouble, but I can tell you this: that the help that I have got not only from the folks in the department who are very professional and have tremendous knowledge, the help that I have got from within the agriculture community and the support that I have got from people who have been involved in this agriculture community for many years has been invaluable — absolutely tremendous — and I thank them for their support. They know, they know that I don't know everything about agriculture and so do I.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I want to point this out. That if I were, say for example a chicken farmer, I might not know much about raising elk or I might not know much about raising cattle or I might not be much in terms of farming and growing pulse crops. But, Mr. Speaker, I bring to this the gifts that I have been given in my life. I use them as fully as I can to support the producers of this province and to make sure, to make sure that the agricultural economy of this province continues to grow and be successful even through the most difficult of times. That's my commitment; that's what I'm doing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Now I know, I know the members of the opposition like to give me a rough time, Mr. Speaker, with regards to agriculture in particular and I want to, I want to address particularly comments by the member from Kindersley when he was up speaking not too long ago. He was very clear about his position, Mr. Speaker. He said, I have little to zero confidence in that new Minister of Agriculture — little to zero confidence.

And then he went on to say, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe he even knows which end of a cow milk comes from. Now, Mr. Speaker, if that member thinks that milk comes from either end of the cow, I'm never sharing a glass with him. He must have been raised on a grain farm, Mr. Speaker. I went up to my office and reported that to my staff. I said, you know, he must have been raised on a grain farm. My chief of staff said, yes, he must have been because he doesn't know it comes from the udder side.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, enough for . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker, I am not a farmer — that's fair enough — but I am a child of Saskatchewan. I love this province and I commit to the people of this province that I will do my utmost to make sure that the agricultural economy continues to grow and be successful, again as I said, even through the most difficult of times.

So, Mr. Speaker, in agriculture we have faced many challenges, as everyone knows. But we have put our support behind this agricultural economy once again. Even in these difficult times, we have increased the budget by about 5 per cent, by about \$13 million. And, Mr. Speaker, we are directing that to the areas

that people have told us they want to make sure are supported — that is to the business risk management areas, Mr. Speaker.

We are making sure that we are following our commitment that we will have at least \$200 million a year over the five years into those programs. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because those programs are absolutely essential to stability in the agricultural economy. Mr. Speaker, we are there for producers. We will continue to be there for producers, and this budget shows it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in terms of changes and restructuring that we're doing. Mr. Speaker, we are amalgamating 31 rural extension offices. We are putting them into nine business development offices in rural Saskatchewan.

Why are we doing this, Mr. Speaker? Why are we doing this? We are doing this first of all because there's been a group out there that has been, has been analyzing and studying the agricultural economy. Most of them, who come from rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they have been analyzing the rural economy and they have pointed to how important it is for us to support the regions. That's one aspect of this decision.

A second aspect of this decision is that over 70 per cent of the people who have called into our Ag extension offices have handled those calls through phone calls, through e-mail, through the Internet. Mr. Speaker, they are not asking for people to be out on their farms.

Well why is that? Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for years the opposition harps against this government and says we don't care about private industry, we don't care about private operations. Well one of the other things that most of them should know, because many of them are from rural Saskatchewan, most of them should know that out in these rural areas there are many private consultants, there are industry consultants and agronomists who are out there giving industry . . . at the farm gate, on farm, they are providing this. As they have been moving in and providing that information, there have been less and less calls to our department for that kind of information. But they still call in because there is other information that is important.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, in doing this analysis and in knowing that we have to make cuts so that we can put more into the producers' pockets, Mr. Speaker, we made the necessary cuts. But we also recognize there needed to be good . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we believe that in these new agriculture business development offices, the nine offices that we've got, plus the call-in centre, we know the people will be getting the kind . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order. I'd just ask the members to be patient and wait for their turn. Member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, all I can say around these offices is that, with the

advice of ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy), with the analysis that has been done, it is our hope, it is our plan, it is our intention that we will give the very best support possible to the development of business in rural Saskatchewan, and that these offices will help in rural redevelopment.

Mr. Speaker, we have also, in terms of our budget, we have made sure that we are supporting the long-term work that is going on in rural Saskatchewan. And a lot of that work has to do with the, with the innovation, the development, the research that has been happening, Mr. Speaker.

We see the work that has gone on over the years and we are allocating more funding in this year's budget for new initiatives in food safety, for new initiatives in the environment. These include programs, Mr. Speaker, that will provide for increased disease surveillance and food safety training, as well as value-chain initiatives. Mr. Speaker, we know that these are absolutely essential in these times. We have had good success in our work with the United States and with Mexico as we have sought to make sure that we have science-based rules for opening our borders and therefore we know that disease surveillance is absolutely essential.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of . . . in terms of some of the other funding that we're putting in for Prairie Agriculture Machinery Institute, they will be getting \$600,000, Mr. Speaker. Ag-West Biotech for the work that they're doing, their work, we will be putting in \$900,000; for Prairie Diagnostic Services so that the tests can be done, Mr. Speaker, they will be receiving \$1.2 million in base funding.

In addition, through these activities of disease surveillance, further payments will be made on a fee-for-service basis. Mr. Speaker, we are supporting the development of agriculture in rural Saskatchewan, and we are proud to have the opportunity to do that.

In terms of agricultural research, in this year's budget the Government of Saskatchewan will commit \$10.4 million — 10.4 million — to the Agriculture Development Fund and the strategic research program at the University of Saskatchewan. That investment will lead to the introduction of new technology and new practices that will keep Saskatchewan on the cutting edge. These investments will lead to enhanced competitiveness and profitability for our industry in the future.

(16:15)

Mr. Speaker, this government is building towards a green and prosperous future. Some of those investments, Mr. Speaker, will look at the new developments in terms of the environment, in terms of making sure that there is the research that is necessary to make sure that we can be producing power with agricultural waste, Mr. Speaker.

We are also looking at further developments in the biofuels, Mr. Speaker — both ethanol and bio-diesel. The research is there and we are moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

One of the members across the way asked how are we making out on ethanol. Well I'm happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that when I first began the studies on ethanol back in '99, one of the first

conversations that I had was with Vince Chin and a couple of other folks from Husky Oil. And one of the first things that they said to me, Mr. Speaker, was, we are going to build an ethanol plant at Lloydminster. Back in '99, Mr. Speaker, we knew that they were going to be building it and we were working with that understanding as we were building towards the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of other options that have been raised. There are some of those that are still underway in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, some of those will be successful. Why? Because we know that ethanol will be a fuel of the future. It is a fuel that is used now to extend the life of a non-renewable resource.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are more ways that it will be used in the future. For example in Brazil, Mr. Speaker, it's used for plastics as well. And we will see many, many more advancements in the use of biofuels.

When I was travelling on the election trail, I ran into a young man in my constituency who is engaged with a company. They are going to be using animal waste, animal fats for biofuels as well. So there's a lot of work going on, Mr. Speaker.

The investments our government is making in ag-biotech and throughout that whole area of research in agricultural products, Mr. Speaker, is going to lead us into a green and prosperous future. It's going to lead us into a future where young people have jobs not just in the cities but in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I talked about the change in our Ag extension offices, the thing that I've also encountered in rural Saskatchewan is that many of the representatives and private consultants that are out there are young people, Mr. Speaker. They're recent grads of our university and they're out there bringing the very best of the knowledge that they've gained at our universities out there to the farmers in Saskatchewan. And we're glad that they're employed here. And we will continue to support their education and will continue to support their opportunities in rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there's so much noise coming from the other side once again, Mr. Speaker, one can hardly hear themselves think in this Chamber, but we'll keep working through it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, over these past few years we've faced, we've faced many challenges in this province. We've faced droughts in this province that are unprecedented. And in each case, Mr. Speaker, we have been there for the producers of this province and we will continue to be.

The Finance minister has said, and he has repeated to me that if there is times when we run into further problems, we will be there. He will be there, I will be there, my cabinet colleagues, my caucus colleagues will be there for the people of rural Saskatchewan. Why? Because we know that this is a vital part of who we are as people in Saskatchewan. We know that it is when we support each other that we have strength. And that's

what we intend to do, Mr. Speaker, because we're building towards a positive future — not a negative kind of future like the guys across there keep talking about.

Mr. Speaker, we want a future where there is growth that is well-grounded. We want a future where there are many, many young people finding jobs in this province — successful jobs. And we're building the environment for those jobs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, I also want to just point to one of the other investments that we've got. And that investment, Mr. Speaker, is in the synchrotron. That, Mr. Speaker, is going to have some tremendous impacts all across the economy. But I can tell you that, Mr. Speaker, that will help in all forms of agricultural research as well. And we're looking forward to seeing the kind of business development, the entrepreneurial research that comes out of that centre and helps to develop a future in this province for the young people and for all people in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We will build a green and prosperous province together. And we will see those major pieces of our economy, health and education, supported in the ways that they need to be supported in order to build that economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are many other people that want to speak on this budget. I for my part support this budget strongly. I believe that this is a budget that will enable us to build a successful future for all the people in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to end just with a . . . Mr. Speaker, we've had some people sing; we've had some people do some other things. And I won't put you through my singing; I can promise you that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat a poem that I wrote a number of years ago, and I know the members on the opposite side absolutely love this poem. So I'd like to read it out to them one more time. They enjoy mocking me for my limited rural and agricultural experience, but for me, Mr. Speaker, that experience — the relationships that I have had with farmers and with the agricultural community over the many years that I served in rural communities, lived in rural communities — has been meaningful and continues to be meaningful to me and so I would like to share this poem:

Am I a Farmer?

I have no quota book.
I have no land.
But, I have touched the earth,
and the earth has touched me.

I have scratched the soil and planted the seed.
I have watched it grow and turn to gold.
With swather, combine and truck
I have gathered the grain to bins
and shoveled and hauled it to elevator.

So am I a farmer?

I've tasted the soil and I've fed the soil.
I've branded the calf and wielded the knife.
I've been in 4-H and learned some skills.
I raised a filly and I trained her well.
I've herded cattle, milked cows, gathered eggs and fed the pigs . . . And yes, I've
slaughtered and butchered and thanked God for the food.

I've battled barn fires and prairie fires.
I've ached and cried with family and friend
over losses no one should have to face.
I've written letters and called for help.
With compassion and pain, I've buried farmers:
men, women and children whom I have loved, whom I
have cared for.
I've prayed and sang and danced and worked and played
and lived with farmers for most of my life . . .

Am I a farmer? . . . no . . .
But yet, I may understand.
For I have learned, and I have compassion,
and I've always loved the land!

"I touch the earth, and the earth touches me . . ."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in favour of this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With everyone being rather rambunctious this afternoon, I'm not sure it's safe to enter the debate, but it is the first opportunity that I've had to enter the debate in this session, so I wish to congratulate you on your election as Speaker, and I wish to thank the member from Regina Wascana Plains for entering that race, and for the professionalism that she adds to this Assembly. I want to congratulate all the new members who have been elected to the Assembly for this session, and I want to welcome back all the incumbents on both sides of the House.

The most important thing, Mr. Speaker, is I want to wish all the best to the member from Yorkton for his speedy and complete recovery. We are all thinking of him and wishing him the best and we would like to see him back in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Humboldt is very, very diverse. It has — although it's quite rural — it does have the city of Humboldt which is, I believe, the province's newest city which has all the urban issues involved with that and urban concerns, and revenue sharing is a concern of theirs.

It has a number of small manufacturers and small businesses, so the availability of skilled labour is extremely important to the citizens of the Humboldt constituency. The business climate, in general, is very, very important and highways are quite important for the transportation of goods and services in and throughout the constituency.

There are four potash mines, so labour issues are important to the constituency. And there are bedroom communities and acreages where many workers commute into Saskatoon or

business owners commute into Saskatoon to conduct their business, or for their jobs.

Also Humboldt constituency is an agriculture community that contains the largest concentration of intensive hog barns. It has the largest feedlot and the only ethanol plant that our, that our province presently has.

There are two hospitals, Mr. Speaker, in Humboldt. One's a regional hospital in the city of Humboldt, and there's a smaller hospital in the town of Lanigan. And there also is St. Peter's College, which is an affiliate of the U of S (University of Saskatchewan).

So there are very, very few provincial issues, Mr. Speaker, that don't directly impact some area or some sector of the Humboldt constituency. From post-secondary education to K to 12 education, to health care, to business, to highways, to all of the issues that affect the province, definitely affect the constituency of Humboldt.

This budget that was introduced by our Premier and his NDP government will have a huge negative impact on the Humboldt constituency, as well as the province as a whole. It's a deficit budget, Mr. Speaker. It's the fourth consecutive deficit budget that this Premier and his government have delivered, which increases the debt load for every single man, woman, and child in our entire province. It's a deficit that Roy Romanow and Janice MacKinnon fought so hard to get a handle on and this Premier seems so anxious to grow. And they laugh. But since this Premier took power, each and every year that he has been in power, they have spent more than they have taken in. They have created an increasing debt. And we will all pay the price for that; our children will pay the price for that; our children's children will pay the price for that.

It's a budget, Mr. Speaker, that exposes beyond question which political party and which leader had a hidden agenda in the last election.

Referring to the NDP's most ridiculous ad — and I have it here, this big headline, Tell Us Again — I think our Premier should tell us again. I think he should tell us again how he has no intentions to raise taxes. I think he should tell us again how he will not close any more hospitals. I think he should tell us again how he won't close any more long-term beds. I think he needs to tell us again about the schools that he promised to build. I think he needs to tell us again about the tax relief that he promised for the education portion of property tax. I think he needs to tell us again about his contribution to the integrated health service centre at the U of S. I think he needs to tell us again how we're going to have the lowest utility package in the country.

And I think he needs to go back out to Humboldt. He loved going there during the campaign. I believe he visited there three times. And I think he should trek out back there and I think he should tell them again how he's totally committed to the new hospital in Humboldt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — The Premier needs to tell us again how he is

going to address the issue of training, recruiting, and retaining health care professionals.

He needs to tell us again about his commitment to the revitalization of rural Saskatchewan. And he needs to tell us again — and his Minister of Agriculture mentioned — how they've been looking at the recommendations given out of the ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) report. Well they've been looking at them for a long time, but they haven't done anything about them.

So the Premier needs to stand up and tell us again. But I don't think he will, Mr. Speaker. I don't think he will tell us again. I don't think he had any intentions of keeping any of those promises, and that's why he will not tell us again.

He told the people of the Humboldt constituency, he told the people of the province all of those things so that he could keep his seat in the House. That was his agenda. That was his goal. That's what he set out to do. And I don't think he's prepared to go out there now and tell them again how he's committed to all of those things.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite tired, quite frankly, of the NDP government portraying themselves as the champions of social issues and concerns when they're doing absolutely nothing to ensure that there is a sustainable source of revenue to fund any of the programs in a meaningful way.

(16:30)

And I'm tired of the NDP whining and complaining about the negative attitude of the Saskatchewan Party, when they can't even recognize the only thing we're negative about is them. The only thing we're negative about is the NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — I'm tired of the NDP denying reality. They deny it. They shake their heads; that can't be true. I don't know where they get their statistics from; I don't know where they get their information from. But they clearly show that our province isn't growing. Our young people are leaving. Our economy is struggling. Our tax base is shrinking. Our health care and education can't be sustainable unless we do something about all of those things.

And if those statistics . . . If it isn't true, if those statistics are wrong, if we're using the wrong statistics, then why did the Premier need to make promises he knew he couldn't keep? Why couldn't he make promises he knew he could keep when he was on the election campaign? And why, why does he have a Finance minister that now is delivering what he says — he admits and tells — is going to be a tough budget?

Why is it a tough budget? If those statistics are not true, if our province isn't stagnating, if our young people aren't leaving — if none of that is true — if we're growing and we're prosperous, why did those things need to be done? Why did it have to be a tough budget?

Mr. Speaker, this budget attacks everyone in Saskatchewan. It attacks all families. It attacks rural communities. It attacks our

northern communities. It attacks the agricultural producers in a huge way. It attacks the municipalities, the elderly, the sick, the business owners, the labour force. There is no one that won't be negatively affected by this budget.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget the decreases in services and programs and the increases in fees are absolutely astounding. And there was a list supplied to us and I would like to read some of those into the record, because I don't think a lot of people in Saskatchewan are even aware of the number of things that are being taken away in programs and the number of fees that are being increased.

But there's going to be a closure of 22 of the province's 31 rural service centres. There's going to be a closure of nine Saskatchewan Environment offices. There's going to be an undisclosed number of health care facility closures and conversions. There's going to be a reduction in the number of long-term care beds. There's going to be the elimination of the farm fuel tax rebate. There's going to be a 20 per cent reduction on the rebate on bulk farm fuel.

There's going to be a cancellation . . . And the Agriculture minister should rethink his commitment to the producers. There's going to be a cancellation of livestock and horticultural facilities incentives program. There's going to be the cancellation of the farm family opportunities initiative — an initiative that the former Agriculture minister was so proud of. And they talk about being green and that being so important. Well guess what, Mr. Speaker? They're cancelling the Conservation Cover Program which they championed as their green program.

A \$700,000 reduction of funding to the Prairie Diagnostic Services lab. I don't know, they mustn't have told the Agriculture minister that this was happening because he talked about increasing food safety and food safety testing. Well that's for CWD (chronic wasting disease) testing, Mr. Speaker, and they're slashing the funding for that.

There's elimination of the short-term hog loan program. The prices are dropping. That has been a relatively successful program. The recuperation of the money that they have spent on that program in the past has been close to 100 per cent. The former minister led the hog producers to believe that the program was going to be extended, but this Agriculture minister eliminated it. And elimination of the livestock drought program; a closure of the extension services branches.

Mr. Speaker, the fee increases; there's four pages of fee increases. In the Department of the Environment there's an increase in angling licence fee. There's a new big game draw licence application fee. There's increases from various Crown land disposition fees. In the Department of Health there's increased fees for certificates of various vital events and increased fees for certified photocopies of certificates. They're going to increase the fee to photocopy, Mr. Speaker. They're going to introduce new fees for water tests undertaken by the municipalities and businesses.

SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) fines and registration fees. There's a whole entire page of increases that SGI plans to make to registration and fees and to fines. Many of

those will directly impact in the registration fee increases, Mr. Speaker, the agriculture producers and the farmers of the province.

Mr. Speaker, there's an increase or an . . . They're going to introduce application fee for reopened Crown mineral land in a surveyed part of the province.

In the Department of Justice there's a half a page of increased fees in the Department of Justice alone.

Mr. Speaker, there's going to be an increase in the Victims' Fund. There's going to be . . . They're going to introduce a fee to recover the charge levied by ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan), Mr. Speaker — something that's increased phenomenally since they started using the ISC system. And they're going to increase that yet again.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, like I said, the list goes on and on. But we're looking at an increase in the annual provincial park entry fees, an increase in the fees to obtain a building permit on park land. They're going to introduce a firewood burning permit fee. They're going to increase the weekly, seasonal, and hourly admission fee to park swimming pools by 10 per cent and an increase to park swimming lesson fees.

That directly affects the families of Saskatchewan. It affects the families that choose to stay in Saskatchewan and have a holiday. It's a holiday tax, Mr. Speaker; it's a holiday tax for those that choose to stay in our province.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, they announced that 12 of our provincial parks will not open until mid-June. They talk about it, or spent a great deal of money, Mr. Speaker, on our future, or you know, campaigning that Our Future is Wide Open. But our parks are closed. Sorry about that. The future may be open but our parks are closed.

The tourism potential that we have is phenomenal. We haven't even begun to realize our tourism potential here in Saskatchewan. And yet we're going to limit that by keeping our parks closed.

It was kind of humorous because it wasn't all that long ago I was reading the *Reader's Digest*, the May edition of 2003. And there was an article in there; it's called "Pedalling to Paradise." It was written by Michelle Mulder, and she tells the story how she travelled across the country from end to end and how she enjoyed the trip. And it says . . . You want to know? I'm sure everyone wants to know what it says. It says:

Throughout British Columbia and Alberta, each time I left a campground, fellow residents waved goodbye, wishing me well. In Saskatchewan, though, the cluster of little green tents on my map dwindled to a . . . (splattering).

That means we didn't have a lot of parks. She had a tough time finding parks for her to camp in. But we're going to close the one we got, so we're going to have to tell cyclists such as this gal, you know, start later because we're not opening our parks until the middle of June. The NDP are cancelling summer.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that there's a time restriction to

the speeches because there's so many people that want to talk to this, or enter this debate on the budget because there's so much that needs to be said.

But I wish to focus on two areas before I close — and first being the attack on rural Saskatchewan and the second being the attack on the sick and the elderly. The producers of this province have faced two, and in some areas, three years of consecutive drought and the impact of the discovery of BSE. They have not had a crop insurance program that is as broad or as effective as the programs that are offered in other provinces, and yet in this province, in Saskatchewan, their premiums have been increased for three consecutive years while the coverage has been significantly reduced. And yet we have a minister that says he's trying to support or he supports the producers of this province. I think not, Mr. Speaker.

In Saskatchewan we have an NDP government that has refused to contribute to the two-year transition funding that the federal government made available — funding that other provinces have participated in, programs other provinces have participated in. But our province told our producers, sorry, we're not participating; we're not putting in our 40 per cent.

Our producers here in Saskatchewan are now being told by the NDP government that they will not be contributing to the final payment of the CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program). Mr. Speaker, these producers are getting desperate. They've been hit by drought, they've been hit by BSE, they don't have adequate crop insurance coverage. They counted on this government to be a government of their word. And guess what? Yet again, they're disappointed.

The producers of this province have an NDP government that said that they recognize that the amount of education tax levied against agriculture property is unfair. And they did, at one point in time, introduce the tax rebate program, but they introduced it solely for the purpose of stopping a major tax revolt because the movement was growing in rural Saskatchewan. And the minute that that stopped, they also scrapped the program.

The minister talked about, just previously talked about how he was so frustrated with the federal government when they didn't keep their word, when they didn't meet their obligations, when they couldn't meet or would not meet their responsibilities. How frustrated do you think the producers of this province are? They're frustrated, Mr. Speaker, because their own provincial government is doing all of those same things to them.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan the most unlevel playing field is not on the global front where foreign countries are subsidizing more than our own country. In Saskatchewan the most challenging unlevel playing field is right here in our own country of Canada, because the Saskatchewan producers have to do with far less than their neighbouring provinces for support from their government. Other provinces value and support their main agriculture industry and their farm families far more than this NDP government has ever supported the producers of this province since they've taken power.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to take a few minutes and talk about the state of the health care in this province and how I do not feel that this budget is going to address any of those issues.

The NDP government's intention to close or convert small hospitals is an extremely frightening prospect for rural Saskatchewan. The Premier went to Humboldt; he promised that the Humboldt hospital would be built. Now I wonder if he will go out and do that now. Is he going to tell Humboldt now that their hospital is still going to be built?

What about the Lanigan Hospital? Is it going to remain open? Is the Lanigan Hospital going to remain open or is it one that's on the list to be gone, even though, Mr. Speaker, it's been proven in the past that it does not save money to close all these hospitals?

It does not mean that the nurses and doctors are going to stay in Saskatchewan and move to the other hospitals. They're going to either retire or they're going to go on to a different job choice. But to assume that they're going to move to where a hospital is, is simply a fallacy because they have established lives and they are not going to move, and many of them will not move. So we'll be losing health care workers. We're going to be losing doctors and we're not going to save a whole heck of a lot of money out of the deal.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to relate a short story to you before I close and it's one that most members on this side of the House know. My father, who is 84 years of age, had a heart attack within the last year. And an ambulance was called and he was taken to the hospital in Lanigan and they were doing everything they could for him. And I met him there once the ambulance had arrived.

The doctor in Lanigan phoned Saskatoon. He got the ambulance to stay so that they could transport my father to Saskatoon. And he phoned and said, we're bringing in this 84-year-old man who's, you know, having a heart attack. Saskatoon said, don't send him. Two reasons: they said because of his age and because they didn't have any room. They did not have any room for my father to be transferred.

Now the doctor and the nursing staff did a fabulous job on my father and he is fine. But he spent a number of nights in the Lanigan Hospital. They couldn't give him a bed because they were too full. They already had an elderly lady on a stretcher and they had to put my father for the first two nights on a stretcher as well. And they put him in a . . . I'm not sure what kind of room but it was a comfortable room. But they didn't have a bed to offer him because the beds were all full.

And I went to see my dad before I left him to go home in the wee hours of the morning and I never ever recalled any given time when my father had been ill. So I asked him, I said, dad, have you ever had to stay in a hospital? And he told me, in quite indignantly in fact, that he would have me know that in 1941 he had had his appendix out. Mr. Speaker, that's 42 years — 42 years this man had never used the system. He had never required any medical care in a hospital and we didn't have a bed, and we didn't have a bed. We didn't have a bed for him in Lanigan, and they didn't want him brought into Saskatoon.

(16:45)

So if we close these smaller facilities, I would like the NDP government, I would like the Premier, to tell me what do we do

under these circumstances. What are we going to do? Because I am not willing, I simply am not willing to let these people die. I will not, will not, stand by and let that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use a quote. It's by Ralph Goodale. And it's fairly recent, on January 14, 2004. And the quote is:

A strong economy and a strong society are mutually interdependent. Our ability to sustain highly valued social programs depends upon a strong performance economically.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a chicken-and-egg scenario. We must grow the economy. We must grow the number of taxpayers in this province. Even . . . I mean if the members can't understand that, could they understand this? Even co-ops need people. So if we want to have more co-ops, we need more people.

Our health system is going to implode, and our social programs will become non-existent, and we will have a lot more closing in this province than just our parks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier of the province led the people of Saskatchewan to believe that he was a man of his word. During the 2003 election he said, and I quote:

It is a platform that is financially achievable, financially viable.

He also said, and I quote:

It is a platform that provides the room fiscally for the ongoing and growing base funding to health and education and other valuable public services.

He also said, and I quote:

And it is a platform that provides for the room to receive the recommendations of the Boughen Commission on the funding of education.

And the fourth quote, Mr. Speaker, is:

It is platform that is realistic, practical, and above all, affordable.

Mr. Speaker, there was a hidden agenda, but it wasn't the Saskatchewan Party's. There was a hidden agenda by the Premier to gain power any way that he could. And then his agenda was to get the people of this province to bail out his miserable government for their mismanaging money for all the years that he has been in power. That was his agenda.

So now it's a survival budget that we've heard from the Finance minister. It's a survival budget; it's not going to grow the province. And who's going to pay the price for the fact that we've had four consecutive deficit budgets, for the fact that for four years this government has spent more than they've taken in? Who's going to pay the price for that? The business men and women of the province, the labour force, the northern communities, the civil servants, the teachers, the health care workers, the farm families, those who have met with hardships, Mr. Speaker, those with physical challenges, those with

addictions, those who are in need of medical procedures, and, Mr. Speaker, our children. Our children are going to pay the price, Mr. Speaker.

I will not be supporting the budget and I will support the amendment by the member from Canora-Pelly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations, the member for The Battlefords.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to enter the debate today on the budget and the amendment to the budget, the budget presented by the Minister of Finance in this Chamber just a short time ago.

Mr. Speaker, I notice the clock and I just wish to serve notice that I believe that I will not be able to finish my remarks today, and that I will continue my remarks when the debate is next called at the next sitting of the House.

But with the amount of time that's come forward, Mr. Speaker, I do want to indicate that I think this debate on the budget of the Minister of Finance and of the Government of Saskatchewan is a very important debate. This is a critical time in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, a critical time that recognizes some of the challenges of the past with a vision for the future that will take us through these difficult times in a way in which the people of Saskatchewan will feel that they are very much a part of developing the future of the province for all of our children and our grandchildren.

This is a wonderful province, Mr. Speaker. It's a wonderful province that has fallen on difficult times many times in our past. And each time we have had those difficulties, Mr. Speaker, we have found ways of gathering ourselves together and working together, worked ourselves out of the difficulties and have had many years of prosperity in between our difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of those challenging times whereby we've had forces beyond our control like drought, disease, forest fire conditions — difficult times, Mr. Speaker, with a small population, a population that does need to grow but a small population nonetheless, struggling to meet some of our needs.

Mr. Speaker, I had the benefit of serving on the Treasury Board of this government during the past three months as this budget developed. I had the benefit, Mr. Speaker, of working with the Minister of Finance through these very difficult times of looking at every single line item in every single department in this government. I had the benefit, Mr. Speaker, of being able to scrutinize the needs of the people of Saskatchewan against the ability of the province to pay for those needs.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say in my opening remarks here, I want to say that it was a pleasure to work with the Minister of Finance as he reviewed those budgets and with compassion and with caring, recognized the significant challenges faced by the people of Saskatchewan, but was not afraid to take the

necessary steps to correct some of the problems that existed within the system and to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, these are difficult and challenging times, and they do demand some courage on behalf of those who must make decisions. I couldn't help thinking over the last little while as we not only developed the budget but rolled it out over the last few hours, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help thinking about how easy it is to be in opposition at this point in time. How easy it is to criticize the moves of a government that dares to make decisions. Choices, Mr. Speaker, have to be made as we move from a difficult time into a more prosperous time — choices, Mr. Speaker, that require us to examine all of our . . . the depth of our feelings about this province.

Mr. Speaker, we are examining where we want to go based on where we've been, and we are making choices, Mr. Speaker. Difficult as they might be, we are making choices that are going to move us forward into the 21st century.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have been around a table with the Minister of Finance as we've examined this process and dared to take, dared to take the, dared to take the steps necessary to see where we're going.

Mr. Speaker, just in terms of some of these difficult choices, there's a few things that I find important as we move forward. Mr. Speaker, I take a look at some of the challenges that we face. We know that coming into this budget process, Mr. Speaker, we had a number of very significant circumstances that we had to face.

Number one, we knew, we knew that the province was operating from a position of having debt. We had debt that we had to repay. We had debt that we wanted to balance out. Mr. Speaker, that had to be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, we also knew that we had a revenue strain that, if nothing changed, would be at approximately 2 per cent a year into the future. We also looked at status quo expenditures of the government, and we realized that, if we did nothing, those expenditures would continue to grow at approximately 3 per cent per year. Mr. Speaker, there's a growing gap there that simply meant more and more debt — 2 percentage revenues; 3 percentage expenditures. We would have no ability whatsoever to grasp . . . how do we reduce that debt if we let this go on?

Mr. Speaker, what we did was we found a way. We found a way, Mr. Speaker, to address that gap. We had to deal with debt. We had to deal with growing debt. And in order to have a future for this province, we had to close it. We had to shut it down. It would take courage. It would take an awful lot of expertise to move in that direction.

And, Mr. Speaker, this budget gives us a fiscal framework now to move forward. That fiscal framework, Mr. Speaker . . . very easy to grasp by international bankers and lenders who will not reduce the province's credit rating as a result of this budget, who will not increase the cost of borrowing which this province must do because of our long-term accumulated debt, Mr. Speaker. It will not stress the province of Saskatchewan in the international marketplace.

There are some things, Mr. Speaker, that are difficult to explain

on coffee row because they take a certain amount of time to do that. But those things, Mr. Speaker, are easily understood in the marketplace, the international financial marketplace of this world.

And Saskatchewan has addressed that issue. We have reduced our long-term costs as a result of putting in a difficult budget. And as challenging as this is and as difficult as this is to roll out to the people of Saskatchewan, we know it's the right thing to do because next year our interest costs will be lower. Next year our ability to borrow money will be good, and our credit rating in the world marketplace, Mr. Speaker, will be very, very strong.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that we had to address. I think the first has been discussed by other members, Mr. Speaker. But most important of all, I want to add my voice to the fact that health care is the number one priority of the people of this province. Health care is the number one priority of this government. Health care, Mr. Speaker, is addressed in this budget like it's never been addressed before in the history of this province — record spending on health care to address some very critical needs of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think a lot of people in Saskatchewan — and some in this House — don't fully understand the extent to which the people of Saskatchewan cover the costs associated with two of our priorities: health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I'm looking at all these numbers, Mr. Speaker, and . . . I'm having different people tell me they want me to finish on Monday. I think maybe what I would do, Mr. Speaker, then at this point in time, seeing that it is almost 5 o'clock . . . is to adjourn debate, and we'll carry on at the next sitting of the House. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for The Battlefords that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.

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