



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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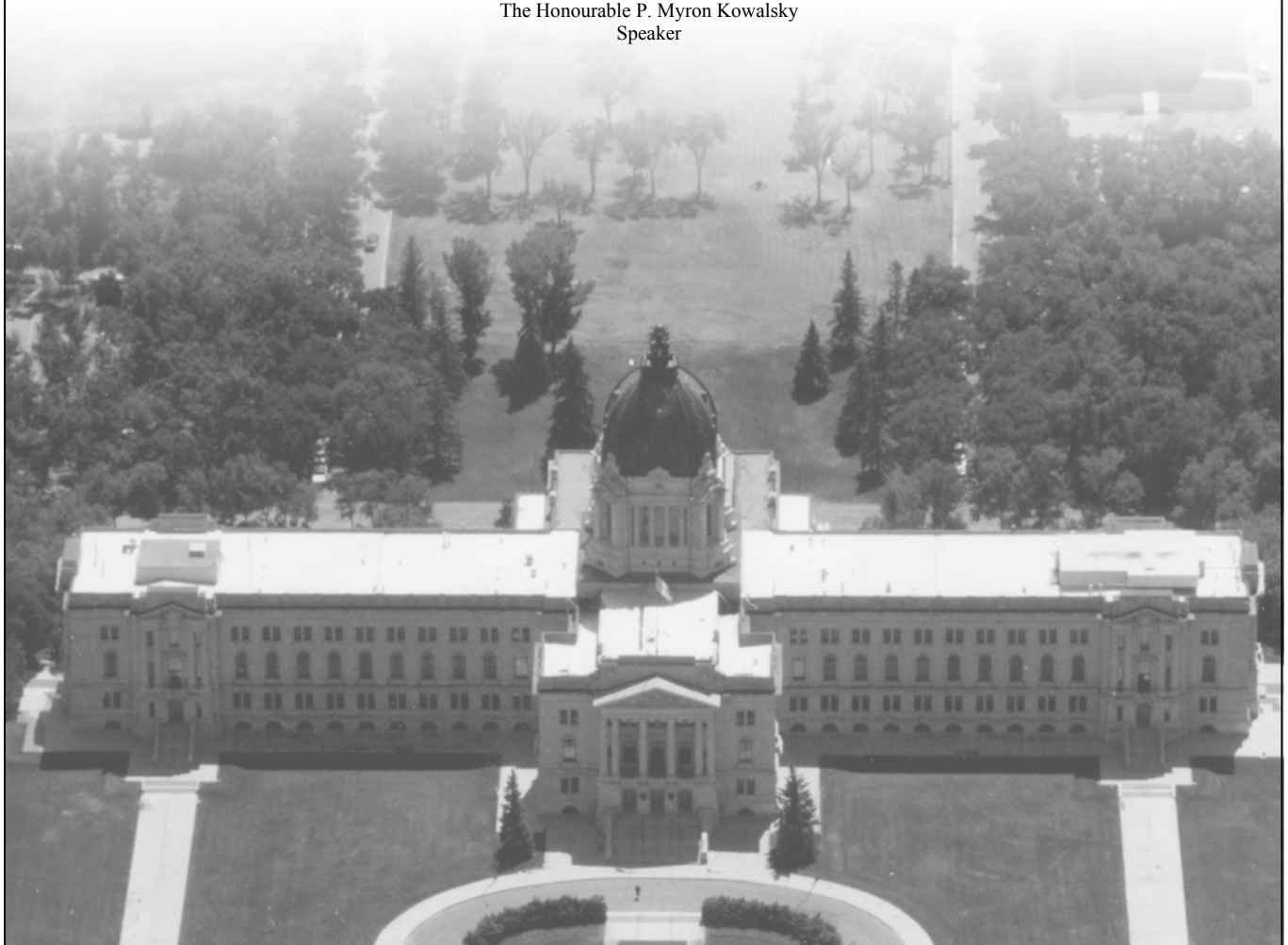
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
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 Rosetown-Elrose.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by members of my constituency, Rosetown-Elrose, regarding recent changes to the crop insurance program that result in large premium increases for insured farmers while overall coverage is reduced. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

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.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the community of Beechy and I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I once again rise in the legislature with a petition from citizens in my constituency who are extremely concerned about the terrible condition of Highway 43. 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.

Mr. Speaker, this was signed by the good folks of Gravelbourg and Coderre.

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 the town of Davidson that are very opposed to a possible reduction of services to 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 and Imperial health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum, with 24 acute care, emergency, and doctor services available, as well as lab, public health,

home care, and long-term care service available to users from the Davidson and Imperial areas and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from citizens that are very concerned about their poor cellphone service in their area. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in the region encompassed in the constituency of Biggar.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan concerned with living facilities for the elderly. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that citizens of Unity and district remain in the community for this necessary service that will bridge the gap between independent living and long-term care.

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

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

I so present.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning cellular telephone service in the constituency of Biggar;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 63, 69, and 72.

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall

on day no. 20 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation: how many full- and part-time positions will be lost with SPMC due to the budget, and can the job description for each lost job be provided?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 20 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: in light of the recently announced cull of 19 million chickens in Canada, and given the need to replace those birds, will any action be taken to expedite the granting of quotas to Saskatchewan chicken and egg producers who are on waiting lists awaiting the granting of quotas by the Chicken Farmers of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan hatching egg producers marketing board respectively?

I so present.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the members will get a real kick out of this introduction because I'm about to introduce one Paul McCallum. Paul McCallum I think will be known to all of the members and the people of Saskatchewan as a kicker for the Saskatchewan Roughriders and one who enjoys an excellent reputation, I might add.

The reason I'm introducing him here today is that in the off-season he's employed by SaskEnergy where he promotes energy conservation and also helps out with the provincial science fair program. I'm just delighted that he's here today to be able to witness our proceedings.

I would ask all members to join me in extending a warm welcome to Paul and also to Ron Podbielski from SaskEnergy who's with him here today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very excited and pleased to be able to introduce to you or reintroduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, 50 grade 7 and 8 students from Pilot Butte School.

This group warmly welcomed me and, Mr. Speaker, they worked through their own parliamentary proceedings. They had their own members' statements and question period; they passed a Bill, all with great presence of debate and procedure. They learned a lot from that and we learned a lot about students

who are very interested in the British parliamentary system of democracy and perhaps future parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, they're accompanied today by their teachers, Mike Spicer and Tom MacCallum. I'm looking forward to meeting with them and being able to answer their questions later on this day.

I would ask all members to give a warm welcome to the grade 7 and 8 students of Pilot Butte School.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I noticed that in the gallery on the east side, my neighbour John Hofer and his wife — and I apologize, I can't remember his wife's name — have joined us. I mentioned that John was in Regina for medical reasons. He's looking very good. I'm glad he feels well enough to join us and I hope that he enjoys the proceedings this afternoon. And would everyone please welcome him and his wife and their son, Ben, to our Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the House I'd like to introduce two special people up in the west gallery, my ministerial assistant and her son, Liam, who is here doing a social studies project and interested in question period. And I hope he finds question period interesting and we want to wish you all a very interesting time here.

Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Funding for the Canadian Light Source

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate the University of Saskatchewan and specifically the Canadian Light Source for securing an additional \$19 million towards their operating funds from the federal government yesterday — \$16 million from the science and engineering research Canada, and \$3 million from Western Economic Diversification Canada.

This funding will go a long way to enabling the CLS (Canadian Light Source) to stay competitive with other synchrotrons around the world by staying open 24/7, Mr. Speaker, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This government could learn a lesson on how to run MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) in Saskatchewan from the synchrotron.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday many people were asking me what's the

Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to operating the synchrotron going to be. However there wasn't a cabinet minister to be found at the announcement. There wasn't a government MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from that side of the House to be found.

So, Mr. Speaker, never one to miss an opportunity, I took it upon myself to make a few commitments on behalf of the government seeing that a minister wasn't there. I hope the minister didn't mind — what's a few million dollars between friends. It's for a great cause and I guess I'll have to be a little friendlier to the Finance minister to make sure they get approved.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

#### Canadian Women Win World Hockey Championship

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the Canadian Women's National Hockey Team on winning the world championship last night.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Mr. Speaker, this was the Canadian women's eighth consecutive world championship, a record that speaks of the excellence of women's hockey in Canada. But more, Mr. Speaker, it's a record that speaks of the excellence of these particular Canadian hockey players, of their commitment, their determination, their hard work, and their drive to succeed in their chosen sport.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is well represented on this national hockey team and I think it's fitting that Saskatchewan's own Hayley Wickenheiser scored what proved to be the winning goal in last night's victory. Ms. Wickenheiser of Shaunavon is arguably the best woman hockey player in the world.

Other Saskatchewan players whose contributions have meant success to this team include Colleen Sostorics, originally from Kennedy; Dana Antal from Esterhazy; and Kelly Bechard from Sedley. And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan connections don't end there. Also part of this win is the team's head scout, Wally Kozak from Wadena, and the team massage therapist, Mavis Wahl from Piapot.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to every member of the Canadian Women's National Hockey Team, both players and staff. As Canadians we thank them for their efforts and take pride in their victory.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### Closure of Rural Service Centres

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP (New Democratic Party) government has seen fit this past budget to

slash and burn in rural Saskatchewan. One of the places where they've slashed and burnt is by cutting 22 rural service centres across Saskatchewan. This is especially disturbing considering all the talk that this government has done about how important agriculture is and how value-added processing is vital to the growth of Saskatchewan. Yet, Mr. Speaker, with these 22 rural service centres closed, it will make it even more difficult for farmers and ranchers to obtain important information about crop protection.

This government has repeatedly told farmers to diversify. Well, Mr. Speaker, they're attempting to do that by experimenting with new crops but they need the services of agrologists close at hand to consult with. This government is telling agriculture producers that they should diversify in order to survive, but they're deliberately making it difficult for the producers to do this.

How can the office of rural revitalization stand by and see 22 rural service centres close? How is that going to grow Saskatchewan? To the Minister of Agriculture: is this the right thing to do?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### Second Annual Women's Forum

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to building a society where women's contributions are fully recognized and valued. It is therefore essential that the voices of Saskatchewan women be heard and that our concerns be addressed.

With that end in view and in keeping with the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Women released last year, the second annual women's forum is being held in Regina today. The theme of the forum this year is Celebrating Women and will include opportunities for participants to respond to the action plan as well as to put forth ideas on how to address women's equality issues.

Mr. Speaker, this year's forum has representation from more than 60 women from approximately 45 women's groups, including nine Aboriginal women's organizations in Saskatchewan. This year's goals are based on what women at last year's forum said they wanted accomplished in future meetings: empowering and energizing participants, building meaningful links between women's groups and government, increasing awareness of women's issues and key priorities, and creating an opportunity for women from all over the province to meet and talk.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge and thank the women, the individuals, and the organizations that work hard to promote gender equality and the full participation of women in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of Saskatchewan. And I look forward to seeing the results of today's forum.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### Delayed Opening of Douglas Provincial Park

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received a copy of a letter directed to the Premier from the Elbow town council expressing their grave concern about the late opening of Douglas Provincial Park and the negative impact that will have on the local business community. And the letter reads as follows:

Dear Premier Calvert:

With the recent announcement that Douglas Provincial Park will not be opening for the season until June 18th, Council would like to express their displeasure with this decision.

Rural Saskatchewan has seen a decline of population and services, but the Village of Elbow continues to hold their own, and is growing and offering more services every year. Elbow's success is directly related to the tourism industry. Year after year, we see an increase in the number of tourists coming to the Village and the Lake Diefenbaker area.

Elbow relies on the tourism industry to maintain our services. Without tourism, some of our businesses would only be able to operate seasonally at best. Many would not be in operation at all. Our local grocery store, service station, golf course, marina, museum, specialty shops and restaurants will all be affected by the decision to postpone the opening of Douglas Provincial Park.

By delaying the opening of Douglas Park until June 18th, our tourism season is reduced by one-third. That translates into a one-third loss of revenue, which will no doubt have a negative effect on existing businesses, plus deter anyone else from setting up business in the Village.

Once again Council wishes to express our disappointment in this decision, and would like an answer as to why this decision was made. We would appreciate a reply by April 12th.

(Signed) Yours truly, Richard Lindemann, Mayor.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(13:45)

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

### North Saskatoon Business Association Builder Awards

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I, along with the minister for Industry and Resources and a capacity crowd of some 600 people, attended the seventh annual North Saskatoon Business Association Business Builder Awards.

Mr. Speaker, the NSBA (North Saskatoon Business Association) has approximately 675 members and is committed

to the health and growth of the business community in Saskatoon. The Business Builder Awards are a celebration of business success and of acknowledging the hard work, dedication, and commitment that businesses devote to Saskatoon's economic viability and sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, here are the winners of the 2004 NSBA awards: The New Direction Award went to Hagel's Keylock/Primrose Husky; the winner of Job Creation Award was V Com; Saskatoon Fastprint Limited won the Team Building Award; the Management Quality Award went to the Saskatoon Inn; the Small Business Award went to Container Port of Saskatchewan; Industrial Machine and Manufacturing won the Export Award; the winner of the Business Builder Award was Westwind Aviation; and the Member of the Year Award went to Greg Trew, Claymore Consulting.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure my colleagues will join me in congratulating all the nominees and all the winners of the 2004 NSBA Business Builder Awards. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### Comments by Minister of Health

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just when I thought that the conduct of members on the opposite side of the House had reached an all-time low, I was shocked and disturbed to hear the Minister of Health draw attention to a woman's disability in his budget speech.

On Monday, the minister went through a list of books he would like to give members on this side of the House. Here's what the minister had to say about the member from Estevan, and I quote:

And for the member of Estevan, a book that was written by Randy Burton's wife, Katherine Lawrence ... it's called *Ring Finger Left Hand*.

Mr. Speaker, now if that minister had any sense at all, he would realize how insensitive his remarks really were. Several years ago this member suffered serious injuries in an accident that resulted in the partial loss of the ring finger on her left hand. The injury resulted in a three-week hospital stay, skin grafts, over 400 stitches, and a case of gangrene.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the callousness demonstrated by the Minister of Health towards the member from Estevan is despicable, insensitive, and beneath the conduct expected of members of this Legislative Assembly. The member from Estevan is very conscious of her disability and does not need reminders of this horrific incident — especially from the Minister of Health. The minister's heartless remarks demonstrated tremendous thoughtlessness towards people with disabilities.

I call on that minister to stand up, apologize to the member from Estevan, and to retract his senseless comments.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Martensville.

**Effect of Budget on Seniors**

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon my question is for the Premier. The NDP's clear strategy in this devastating budget was to pit urban families against rural families. The Premier obviously believes rural families are expendable and rural businesses are optional.

But if the NDP strategy is to pit urban families and businesses against each other, ultimately the Premier and his NDP government has failed because this budget is an all-out attack on everyone in Saskatchewan and particularly devastating, Mr. Speaker, to our senior citizens: increased sales tax, higher income tax, no relief on property tax, long-term care beds and hospital beds closed, waiting lists that grow longer every day.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier decide to target seniors for extra punishment in this devastating budget?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question and focusing attention on the budget which was presented to the people of Saskatchewan a few days ago.

I want to point out to the member that the most significant priority — without any debate I think is recognized — is the question of health care. I can think of no group in our society for whom health care is more important than senior citizens in our province. The health care budget has been increased by \$160 million; that's 72 per cent of all of the increased dollars in our budget is going towards health care. Health care now accounts for 44 per cent of our total budget.

It has been a very difficult budget for us to put together, and we've made very many difficult decisions, and the people of Saskatchewan will know this judging from the media coverage of the budget. But we've done this because we feel it's just fundamentally important to support that priority of health care, and that's what we have done.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Martensville.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the minister wasn't listening carefully to the question. We'll get at it again. Either the Premier and his NDP government doesn't realize it yet or you just don't care, but this NDP budget is a no-holds-barred attack on senior citizens in Saskatchewan.

First, Mr. Speaker, the NDP increased the PST (provincial sales tax) by \$135 million. So now everything seniors buy costs more. Then the NDP got rid of indexed tax rates. So now seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes, will have to pay more income tax. And finally the NDP has done absolutely nothing to reduce the property tax burden which is particularly hard on seniors.

Mr. Speaker, why is this Premier and his NDP government hammering senior citizens, many on fixed incomes, by raising the seniors' income tax, by raising the seniors' sales tax, and by breaking the NDP's promise to reduce property tax?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Again, Mr. Speaker, I think I indicated during the budget address that this was a very difficult budget to put together and to present to the people of Saskatchewan. I think I've used the words too that it was in many ways a very tough budget.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we listened to Saskatchewan people about the priorities that they thought were important. We are very concerned about senior citizens and making sure that the funds were there to support health care because we know how important that is in Saskatchewan. We've also heard, I might say, from the opposition over a period of weeks now in the legislature raising concerns about health care.

We know that's the number one priority. That's why we made the tough decisions that we did to support health care, and we stand behind that decision because we believe that's what Saskatchewan people want, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Martensville.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker. This was a tough budget. Unfortunately for the seniors of this province, it was the unkindest cut of all.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP budget sneaks up behind every senior citizen in Saskatchewan and picks their pockets with higher taxes. But that's not the only place, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has decided to attack seniors. The Premier also decided to kick the seniors out of their beds because this NDP budget will result in the closure of long-term care beds across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

But nobody should be surprised, Mr. Speaker. After all, last year the NDP tried to double long-term care fees. Fortunately it didn't work. So now the NDP is simply closing long-term beds and kicking out the seniors. Mr. Speaker, how many long-term care beds will the NDP close this year in Saskatchewan? How many seniors will be served with eviction notices as a result of this devastating NDP budget?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, again the people of Saskatchewan will know that the number one priority in this budget is health care; \$160 million of the increased funding in our budget is going towards health care.

The increased funding in health care, I might add, isn't covered by the 1 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax, \$136

million. It was very difficult to make that decision, but we feel at the end of the day that health care needs to be supported. Having said that, I think we will be challenged even in health care, and we will need to shift resources within health care, as I indicated during the budget speech, to ensure that the funds are going to the priorities that the people have outlined.

Mr. Speaker, I find this line of questioning from the opposition very odd when you consider that just a few years ago that they said that, you know, that health care funding should be held to the rate of inflation and no more. But we know that health care funding has been increasing at a rate three times the rate of inflation. Well with their program, where would we be now, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Martensville.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So how well is this government's system working for seniors? Senior citizens in Saskatchewan suffer the longest hospital waiting lists in Canada. But that didn't stop this NDP from closing hospital beds in this year's budget. So rather than come up with a plan to shorten waiting lists, the NDP decided to close hospital beds and make the waiting lists even longer.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier even know how many hospital beds his NDP government is going to be closing? Will the Premier stand up and tell the senior citizens of Saskatchewan which communities will lose their hospitals this year and how many hospital beds does the NDP plan to axe in Saskatchewan this year as a result of his hopeless provincial budget?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — So, Mr. Speaker, we see again how skilfully the opposition avoids the question that is put to them about what it is that they would do in Saskatchewan, how it is that they would manage health care having made a commitment a number of years ago to freeze health care.

Mr. Speaker, health care is the number one priority the budget outlined, and I'm sure that there will be more details coming from the Minister of Health, where we said that we need to put more funds into high priority areas such as the waiting lists — surgical wait lists and the wait lists for diagnostic services. That is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, because the message we get very clearly . . . that is the priority for Saskatchewan people. And you know what? I don't know what the members opposite are doing, but we believe in supporting the priorities of Saskatchewan people.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### **SaskTel's Business Investments**

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: how much

money did SaskTel lose in the years 2002 and 2003 on its business investments?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well after three years of fairly intense questioning in this House, I was starting to feel like the Maytag man — that nobody would call me any more.

Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say to the member, he will know that over the period of years that SaskTel International has made investments the net profit, Mr. Speaker, was something in excess of \$100 million.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's an interesting answer, but it doesn't direct itself to the question. The question was, how much money did SaskTel lose on its investments in the years 2002 and 2003?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, that member will know, obviously I don't have that figure exactly at my fingertips here. But, Mr. Speaker, I will say, Mr. Speaker, I will say that SaskTel has a long record of its external investments and its SaskTel International investments of bringing profits back to Saskatchewan.

And as I've indicated, the record needs to be looked at. As I've indicated probably a couple thousand times in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, that you need to look at this as an investment portfolio. There will be some investments where you lose, but there will be many, many more that you make profit on, Mr. Speaker.

And over the history of SaskTel International, Mr. Speaker, you can't pick out one isolated year and make a determination based on that one year whether they should be making these investments or not. The record shows that they've made over \$100 million, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Saskatchewan to invest back into Saskatchewan into infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, clearly the minister and the other members of the government over there don't have any idea how much money they lost in SaskTel's money-losing investment portfolio. So I'm going to help this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has acquired a summary of the financial results for SaskTel's 2003 performance. And



according to their own financial statement for 2003, the NDP government lost 19.5 million taxpayers' dollars on their investment portfolio. And SaskTel's financial statement also indicates the NDP lost forty-one and a half million dollars on their investment portfolio in 2002.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that the NDP has lost more than \$60 million on their money-losing investments via SaskTel in those two years?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again this gets a bit complicated. But first of all, a number of the investments, Mr. Speaker . . . Well they can listen if they want. A number of these investments, Mr. Speaker, as I've explained a number of times and tried to get the opposition to understand, will be book figures.

Now I will ask them . . . If they want to pay close attention this year to some of the book values on some of these investments, Mr. Speaker, I think he's going to change his tune. I think that member, I should say, will change his tune, Mr. Speaker, in his line of questioning because he will see in 2004 that many of these investments will be very profitable for the people of Saskatchewan. And it's exactly what we said would happen with those investments, Mr. Speaker.

There would be start-up costs, and many of these investments would mature and start to bring profits back to the people of Saskatchewan. So they can pick out isolated years, Mr. Speaker, and make it look like a disaster. But if they want to be responsible in their approach, they should look at the overall picture, and they will see that this is bringing revenues back to the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note through SaskTel's investments that all their profits are made in Saskatchewan. All of their losses are made outside of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, let's put the NDP's \$60 million loss on bad business investments at SaskTel in perspective.

The NDP cancelled almost all surgeries in the Saskatoon Health Region for the last two weeks in March to save \$200,000. As a result, the waiting list for surgeries in Saskatoon increased by two months. Then the NDP shortened summer by delaying the opening of provincial parks to save a mere \$100,000.

But when SaskTel wants to gamble and lose more than \$60 million on bad business deals, most of which are outside of Saskatchewan, there doesn't seem to be a problem.

Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP continue to take profits earned by SaskTel in Saskatchewan and use those profits to gamble and lose more than \$60 million outside the province on bad business deals, most of which are coming back to haunt the taxpayers of this province? How does losing \$60 million on bad business deals help keep utility rates down for Saskatchewan residents?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well you know, I don't remember the exact quote, Mr. Speaker, but I heard the new Leader of the Opposition right after he was elected leader. And he said something like this, that as a result of the election and as a result of the people having spoken on the Crown corporations, I've learned my lesson, Mr. Speaker. I've learned, he said.

This line of questioning would suggest to me, Mr. Speaker, that that opposition has learned nothing, Mr. Speaker. I think to be attacking a Crown corporation that I think probably poll after poll says is one of the most popular utilities, one of the most popular corporations in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, period, public or private, one of the most popular corporations . . . is acting irresponsibly, I think is incredible, Mr. Speaker.

Again I say, you can't look at investments by picking one or two specific years. You need to look at these investments as they mature. You need to look at these investments, Mr. Speaker, over the long term. Over the long term, they have returned to the people of Saskatchewan in excess of \$100 million. I predict they will return much more, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### Opening Date for Provincial Parks

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I think it's the minister over there that hasn't learned because in the past few years there's been over \$300 million lost by their great investments.

Mr. Speaker, maybe it's starting to make some sense, so we finally understand the twisted logic behind the NDP's decision to keep the parks closed. Mr. Speaker, last year there was a problem at Last Mountain Lake where water levels were extremely low. Now today we learn under the NDP's parks policy you won't be able to go the bathroom at Regina Beach until June 18. The NDP is keeping the washrooms closed.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment: is this the NDP's brilliant new plan to raise the water levels in Last Mountain Lake?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Well thank you . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I understand the logic of that last point, but what I do want to say is that our goal in Environment is to ensure that our park system is sustainable for the people of Saskatchewan. And that's the key point. That's very, very important.

The decision to delay park openings was intended to reduce costs by aligning the services when parks are most used. So we're constantly looking for ways to reduce costs and maintain quality service in our parks.

Now I have heard many concerns from people over the last week about this issue, and it's very important to those people. And I've also been talking to stakeholders and listening to their feedback. So I've asked my staff to look and review what the options are there to see what we can do to find \$100,000 elsewhere and what the implications of that may be.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll consider what options there might be. And as I said, we're listening to people and their ideas, and so I'll have more to say about this pretty soon and just stay tuned.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear who doesn't understand logic. Trying to keep the parks closed and shorten summer — I would suggest somebody over there doesn't understand logic. Mr. Speaker, first the NDP tells me they have to tighten their belts; now they're telling us to cross our legs.

The sad part is the NDP's decision to shorten summer is not really funny. It's not funny to the thousands of campers who will be turned away from their favourite parks on the May long weekend. And it's not funny to the hundreds of small businesses who make their living at provincial parks and have now seen their season shortened by one third.

Mr. Speaker, only the NDP would take away one third of a small business's livelihood with absolutely no consultation or advance warning. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, will he cancel the NDP attack on small businesses and open the parks?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, I said that we are listening to people, and we are gathering that feedback. And we hope to have an answer the next day or two, and we'll be sharing that with the people. Mr. Speaker, we are not into cute one-liners here . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. I just want to make sure that the response is able to be heard. I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, we are not into cute one-liners. We have a very tough budget here in front of us. We have some very important priorities for the people here in Saskatchewan about health and education. And within environment, safe drinking water is a very important issue for us, and we've made a strong commitment to that.

So that's where our targets are, and we'll have more to say about this in the next few days.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Mr. Speaker, they may not be into one-liners, but they sure are into closing parks.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Industry minister said the NDP will be spending 1.4 million taxpayer dollars this year on its future wide open campaign — 1.4 million, Mr. Speaker, to get people to come to Saskatchewan so when they get here they find the parks are closed.

Mr. Speaker, they're always asking us for our input; here's an input. Why doesn't the NDP spend \$1.3 million on the Future is Wide Open campaign and spend the other \$100,000 so the parks are wide open? Mr. Speaker, will the Premier do that?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, as the minister in charge of the Department of Industry and Resources, I want to say to the hon. member and to his colleagues and also to the House as a whole that we take great pride in the province of Saskatchewan. One of the things that we are prepared to do on this side of the House — unlike the members opposite — is to tell the world about Saskatchewan and the great things Saskatchewan has to offer.

I've already indicated publicly, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to be reducing the amount of money spent on advertising under the Future is Wide Open campaign because we're going to be using some of the money that was directed there to promote the centennial of the province next year and also to promote tourism in Saskatchewan. I have every confidence that the Minister of the Environment will be co-operating in that effort as well.

But I want to say to the members opposite that, you know, I was at an event earlier this year where the president of Titanium Company set up shop in Regina. And when asked why, he said, as for us it was the natural place to come; the technicians are here; the space is here, and they have a very much willing, can-do attitude vis-à-vis doing business. He said, it's just a tremendous place to do business. And we want to get that message out to the world, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — It is a tremendous place, but the parks are closed.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: tomorrow is the vote on the budget. Will the Premier stand before the budget vote tomorrow and listen to the people of Saskatchewan and change his mind on this foolish decision to close the parks? Mr. Speaker, will the Premier stand tomorrow before the budget vote and rescind this foolish decision?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, the priorities that we outlined in the budget are good reasons to vote for the budget. We invite the members of the opposition to also stand up and vote for an increase in health care funding. We invite them to stand up and vote for an increase in education funding. We invite them to stand up and vote for an increase in agricultural funding. We invite them to stand up and vote for an increase in funding to our municipalities, Mr. Speaker. We invite them to stand up and vote for funding for fetal alcohol syndrome. We invite them to, for all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, to stand up and vote for a responsible budget. Mr. Speaker, that's what we invite them to do.

Mr. Speaker, what we're not doing on this side of the House is saying one thing one day and saying something else the other day. Here they stand up, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis presenting petitions against expanding the tax to restaurant meals. And then we have a member right . . . you know, hats off to the numerous individuals who support this tax, who support this tax by signing these petitions, Mr. Speaker. Application of PST to the food and beverage industry was well-supported with thousands of petitions.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing one day . . .

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Jobs Affected by Budget**

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Yesterday the Finance minister stated in his scrum that the budget process, and I quote, “. . . did not allow for the kind of careful examination of all the options that were available to us and other options that also need to be examined.”

Mr. Speaker, people have lost their jobs, and they don't know what this NDP government has used as its criteria to establish those cuts. To the minister: how did the NDP government decide these jobs needed to be cut if they haven't the foggiest idea as to the cost savings achieved by those cuts?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we do know, judging from the questions that we get,

that there's no one on that side of the House that has any experience at all in running a government, no one that has any experience at all in terms of Treasury Board because they will know, Mr. Speaker, that we don't go into the process and say, how many people can we fire? That's what they would do.

What we do, Mr. Speaker, we look at the services that are being provided to the people of Saskatchewan. We ask, are those services still necessary? Can those services be changed? Are there better ways, more economical ways, efficient ways, of delivering that service? That's how we approach it — from the viewpoint of ensuring that we can continue to provide services and programs to the people of Saskatchewan. That's our approach, Mr. Speaker.

And we don't say one thing one day and something else the other day.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's refresh for the people of Saskatchewan what this minister is saying.

This minister stands in the House and says, I will be making 500 job cuts. The press ask him, what does that mean as far as financial cuts? People are going to lose their jobs; families will be affected. The minister says, I don't know what those numbers are, and we'll see you in a month approximately; I might have those numbers.

Mr. Speaker, if there are 500 job cuts, at an average salary of about \$45,000 per individual, we should be talking about net savings of \$22 million, Mr. Speaker. If that is the fact and there is \$22 million worth of cost savings in all of the budget documents that this minister has proposed, surely the minister could stand up and tell the people of Saskatchewan which departments are being affected, what amount of cuts are being made, and the full-time job equivalents that are being lost.

Will the minister stand and clarify that for the people of Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:15)

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, we have a collective agreement with our workers, and we will respect those collective agreements. At the end of the day, we'll be able to provide a more detailed analysis of the impact of our budget when it comes to job positions. But if the members want to know where it is that funds have been saved, I invite them to turn to the Estimates document. They have all been provided with a copy of the Estimates documents, and they can see where it is that funding has been reduced in the various departments.

But again, Mr. Speaker, I want to know why is it that they can stand in the House one day and say that we don't agree with

extending this tax to restaurant meals, and then one of their members writes in the Maidstone *Mirror*, petitions support PST expansion. How can he say that applications of PST to the food and beverage industry was well supported with thousands of petitions?

Hats off to the numerous individuals who support this tax by signing these petitions. How can he stand here and petition the Assembly to not do this and then say something completely different to his constituents, Mr. Speaker? How is that possible?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 63 through 72. And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet as well, I'd like to table an amended answer to written question no. 34.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to questions 63 to 72 inclusive have been submitted, and an amendment to question 34 has also been submitted.

## SPECIAL ORDER

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by 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 Saskatchewan Rivers.

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to stand and speak to the budget.

Since this is my first opportunity to speak since the beginning of these debates, I'd like to make a few personal comments, if I might, about what I have observed in this House.

I would like to say that I've enjoyed listening to the speeches from all of the members on both sides of this House, particularly because it gives me an opportunity to know them a little bit as individuals and know where they stand in terms of their beliefs. So I've enjoyed the speeches that I've heard, particularly — and this is with no disrespect to the experienced members — particularly I've enjoyed the speeches from the new members who are entering at the same time and the same gate as I am.

So I've enjoyed the speeches, Mr. Speaker. But there are, there are other parts of the procedure that I've had some problems

with, and I'd like to comment a little on the tone and tenor of this Assembly.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that there's a parliamentary tradition of heckling that goes far, far back, and I recognize the importance of that parliamentary tradition. However I feel that in fact rather than heckling in this Assembly often what we hear is hectoring — in other words, bluster and bully, not the kind of respect that I'm used to in the home that I grew up in, in the schools that I attended, the schools that I worked in, or in most social situations. So I raise this as a personal feeling, Mr. Speaker, regarding the conduct of the House.

And because it is of an interest to me, I checked out the Internet to see what there was on heckling, and I indeed found a heckling home page, a heckling Web page. And on that heckling page, Mr. Speaker, were ten commandments for heckling. And I would ask the members present to listen to these ten commandments and to see how we measure up.

Commandment number one, thou shalt not use profanity. So far so good.

Commandment number two, thou shalt not insult the mother. Again, so far so good although I'd like to think of us . . . We should always, I think, in this House think that our parents and grandparents are looking over our shoulders. I think that would help us indeed.

Commandment number three, thou shalt be intelligent. And here, I believe, we begin to get on shaky ground, Mr. Speaker. I do not question the intelligence of the members of this House, but I certainly believe we're a little shaky on commandment number three in terms of the heckling in this House.

Commandment number four, thou shalt love hockey. Here I believe we're on solid ground, Mr. Speaker.

Commandment number five, thou shalt be aware of the people around you. Mr. Speaker, with all of the noise in this Assembly, I am always aware of the people around me to the point where it's very difficult to hear the actual heckles.

Commandment number six, thou shalt be witty. Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is some who believe themselves to be Winston Churchill in this Assembly, some who believe themselves to be Lester Pearson and John Diefenbaker and some of the great orators of time, but I believe that we fall far, far short, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps it's better at times to remain silent.

Commandment number seven, thou shalt not overkill.

Commandment number eight, thou shalt be friendly. And indeed I see lots of friendly smiles at this moment, so this is not an issue, Mr. Speaker.

Number nine, thou shalt not cross the line. It says nothing about crossing the floor, so I would therefore invite any who would like to come and join us here . . .

And commandment number ten, thou shalt remember the children. And so, Mr. Speaker, I believe when school groups

visit this House, that is the time for us to be on our very best behaviour.

And in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, I've heard people talk about improving the tone and tenor of this House. And in all seriousness I hope that is the case in the weeks and months and years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, it's spring. I'm sure everyone here felt the change in the wind last week; it was a spring wind for sure. On my way to Regina on Sunday night, I saw creeks running everywhere, sloughs filling up. And I even saw Wascana's shoreline significantly higher than it was when I went home on Friday. As Connie Kaldor says, and I won't sing it, "Spring on the prairie comes like a surprise; one minute there's snow on the ground, the next . . . (there's sun) in your eyes."

Mr. Speaker, we live by the seasons in this province, and we live by the weather. We may live in the city or in small towns or on the farm, but our lives and livelihoods are all dependent to some degree on the seasons and on the weather. And because the weather is so changeable, we never know what's going to happen next. Only a few weeks ago it was 50 below, our cars were like blocks of ice, and we were digging out our long johns. Today, well today it is spring.

Mr. Speaker, when I grew up on the farm — and I'm always blessed by the fact that I was able to grow up on a small family farm — there was always the sense of vulnerability of forces that were beyond our control. I can remember my father at the end of the day looking to the hills in the west, checking out the clouds, wondering what was going to come over those hills the next day. We were totally dependent on the weather.

And so I remember the difficult times when we had long stretches of hot, dry weather, and our crops burned in the heat. And I remember the unexpected catastrophes: the sudden hail storms; my mother holding pillows against the windows so they wouldn't break; the quiet frustration on my father's face, the quiet resignation.

On the farm there were many things my parents could control: which crops to seed — spring wheat, durum, barley, oats; when and where to seed the crops, plant potatoes, cut hay, summerfallow, combine. Many things my parents could control, but weather wasn't one of them.

Nor could they trust the open market, the high inputs and low prices. I remember a wheat glut in the late '60s, shovelling out rotten grain from one of our granaries that had been sitting there for three years at a time when many people were hungry and starving in other parts of the world. My parents had no confidence in the open market and rightly so. They were solid supporters of the Wheat Board and so is this government. And I'm pleased to hear on the news today that the WTO (World Trade Organization) has ruled in favour of the Wheat Board.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Mr. Speaker, as a province — regardless of who forms government — we face the same vulnerability as my parents did on the farm. And so when we have a drought, we are as susceptible as my parents were; it is a blow to the entire

provincial economy.

When we have unexpected catastrophes like forest fires and BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), our whole economy suffers. We have always been vulnerable here, always had to respond to forces that seemed to be out of our control. Like my father, we check the horizon at the end of every day. We listen to weather and market reports, but we never know for sure what tomorrow might bring.

And then there are the political and economic forces beyond this province: our so-called Free Trade Agreement, European and US (United States) trade subsidies, softwood and grain duties, the exchange rate, an unequalization formula, 60/40 obligations and farm support programs, and of course reduced support for health care at a time when costs are spiralling.

These are the kinds of pressures this government faces, the same pressures any government would face in this province. And so it begs the question: what can you do? It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, that after the budget I spoke to people in the rotunda, and three or four times people said the same thing to me: what can you do?

Well to answer that question, or any question, I always begin by looking to my mentors, to my parents and grandparents, to my best friend and father-in-law, who is gone now. What did their generation do and what would their advice be now?

A couple of days ago I remembered when I was a young farm boy that one of the very best times of my life then was when my father and my two uncles — his two brothers — when they would get together in the shop and work on farm machinery. I enjoyed those moments incredibly and will always remember them.

There are three things I learned from watching them. First of all, they were co-operative. They had a strong sense of working together. I marvel at how they worked together. There were no arguments, no debates, no heckling. There was lots of good humour and laughter, but never any ridicule. They recognized that each had certain skills that the others respected, so they listened to each other carefully. They recognized and respected each other's skills. They worked together.

Secondly, they were practical. They used the resources at hand, spent as little as possible. They cut corners. They made do with the resources they had.

Thirdly, they were amazingly creative, and they would contribute ideas. And those ideas would build one on each other until a solution was reached that worked for all of them. There was never any argument. They were incredibly creative. They worked together. They were practical. They were creative.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we have presented a budget that is based on that sense of co-operation and working together that is the heartbeat of this province. Before the budget my constituents said to me over and over, we recognize this is going to be a difficult budget — just as long as it is fair.

Secondly, I believe it is a practical budget. It is responsible. It makes difficult choices out of necessity. No one likes the idea

of more sales tax, farm fuel tax, closing of offices, programs, and positions across departments. And no one likes wage restraints. And no one can be happy about the loss of jobs, many jobs. But the budget is an attempt to find a practical and fair solution — spending as little as possible, cutting corners, making do with the resources we have.

(14:30)

So we have 160 million to public health care, 115 of that towards the recruitment and retention of the people who work in our health care system. We have 46 million going to facilities and equipment; two and a half million towards reduced waiting lists; 2 million towards a new MRI for Regina; 6.6 million more to the cancer agency; 2 million to renal dialysis; 16 million for the drug plan; and 1 million to cognitive disabilities including FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder).

We have \$45 million of increase to education funding, with 24 million of that to capital improvements and an increase in the post-secondary graduate tax credit. Working together, practical, responsible, and creative. In spite of the restraint it has left room for many initiatives which are not getting the attention they deserve.

One point five million increase to Kids First; the increase to the post-graduate tax credit from 350 to 500; 200 new child care spaces; an increase in child benefit payments for single parents; 12.6 million for affordable housing construction under the provincial housing framework; 200,000 towards a Green Team initiative to provide young people an opportunity to gain work experience and training in the environmental sector.

Mr. Speaker, this is a difficult budget but even with its constraints we have found space for creative programs that will make a difference for many Saskatchewan people.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Last week I talked about the importance of ideas, of building on each other's ideas to build a green and prosperous economy. In this budget we see a beginning, a foundation for an economy that can become a signature piece for this government. We invite the people of this province to contribute their ideas, their creativity, to this economy — an economy that rises from the very same creativity that I saw in my father and uncles that is an essential part of who we are in this province of Saskatchewan.

We begin with CO<sub>2</sub> gasification, biomass, wind and solar energy, energy efficiency, Green Teams, and more. But this is just a beginning. These are the ideas we can build on, just as our parents and grandparents did in their time. This will require creativity, innovation, and imagination. This is an answer to the member from the opposite side the other day. This is what a green and prosperous economy means. It is an invitation to individuals, co-ops, and communities in this province.

I know the members opposite are skeptical and so I invite their ideas as others have on this side of the House: the Minister of Health, the Minister of Environment, the Premier. But I have to say that I hear no ideas from the other side of the House. What I hear instead is grow, grow, grow. Grow this province; grow the

population; grow industry; grow the economy. Mr. Speaker, this is a meaningless mantra.

When I grew up on the farm, we would grow potatoes. We would grow spring wheat, durum, barley, oats. We would grow crops. We would grow gardens. We did not grow buildings and we did not grow money. We did not grow a future, we created it. This grow thing is part of a corporate rhetoric that is as tiring as the bottom line, if you can remember that, and it reflects what I call a bigger-is-better mentality.

Mr. Speaker, often when we turn on our computers we receive unwanted e-mail — e-mail that I will delicately describe as carrying a bigger-is-better message. I'm sure we've all had to deal with such messages and it's called spam, Mr. Speaker. And we all know what to do with spam. We delete it.

Mr. Speaker, I consider this grow, grow, grow, mantra of the Saskatchewan Party as political spam. Let's delete it. Let's delete it. Let's talk ideas, let's talk ideas — real ideas, not political spam. The people of Saskatchewan are ready for it; that's what they want.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night, on Saturday night I went to a very interesting event at Candle Lake, which is in my constituency. On a night when most of the people in this province, in this country, are watching hockey on television or out to the movies or out to a party, the people of Candle Lake — about 100 people — were gathered in their community hall for a fundraiser. And I thought at first the fund . . . It was a meal of course, Mr. Speaker, it was a meal to raise funds for health services in their community. They have some special plans that they would like to pursue.

But it was more than just a meal because after the meal everyone broke into groups and they brainstormed ideas for what they would like to see in terms of health care for their community. And when they finished that, they brainstormed ways in which they might achieve that.

So on Saturday night while most people were out socializing or at home watching movies, the people of Candle Lake were sitting down, brainstorming, and sharing ideas and talking about the future of health care in their community and in the province. This is the kind of politics we should all be interested in.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to a constituent from the area of Wild Rose, which is also in my constituency. I am quite certain she did not vote for me in the election. But we had a wonderful talk about the possibilities that we could pursue in our constituency. There was a wonderful brainstorming session on the phone of the kinds of initiatives that might help rural Saskatchewan.

In Candle Lake on Saturday night I heard more ideas than I have heard from the other side of this floor over the past two weeks. From this woman in Wild Rose yesterday in half an hour I heard more ideas than I have heard from the members opposite over the past two weeks.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about the possibilities if we can engage in meaningful discussion and sharing of ideas. I see this budget as a beginning. It is a difficult budget but it is fair. It

is fiscally responsible and it leaves room for further development of an economy in this province that is community based, sustainable, green, and ultimately prosperous.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for this budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, firstly I'd like to congratulate you on your re-election. This is the first opportunity I've had to rise in the House and speak this session, and I haven't had this opportunity to congratulate you.

The Speaker is a person who must remain sane when it appears that all around him is less than sane. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I've explained to some of the students that have come to visit me here in the legislature that the Speaker most assuredly should read "Desiderata" every morning before he goes to work. The line that says, "Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence" is something that must ring true often.

I would also like to congratulate the Deputy Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

And also my congratulation to the member from Regina Wascana Plains for letting her name stand for Speaker. There have been 680 elected people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, since our province became a province, and only 37 of those elected members have been women. I believe this is the first time a woman has stepped forward and offered to take on this very important position. Our province is nearly 100 years old and it is time the Saskatchewan legislature finally at least considered that a female could do the job as well.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Draude:** — So my hat's off to the member from Regina Wascana.

Welcome and congratulations to the new members on both sides of the House. These members are part of a whole new world, different from anything they've ever been part of in their life, when a respect is given to all of us because of a title and then we spend the next number of years working hard to try and earn that respect. It's somewhat reversed from the real world outside the walls of this Assembly where everyone has to earn respect for a job or a service well done; it's never just given to us.

I'd like to thank the constituents of Kelvington-Wadena for the honour and privilege of representing them for the third term. I am humbled each and every time I stand in this Assembly and am recognized as the voice of the 17,000 people in the beautiful northeast part of Saskatchewan.

The boundaries of the constituency changed dramatically since the first time I was elected. At that time I represented my hometown and the people that I'd known all my life. With the changes in the boundaries, over 50 per cent of my area is new to

me. It is both a daunting and an exciting challenge to meet the new people who have sent me to Regina to be their voice. Although my immediate family will always be my priority, I want to assure each and every one of my constituents that I consider their rights and needs, as part of Saskatchewan society, my most important job.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the government on their announcement on the FASD support program announced in the budget. Any effort — and I do mean any effort, Mr. Speaker — is a step forward when it comes to dealing with a condition that is 100 per cent preventable. But the occurrence of FASD, Mr. Speaker, is as high as 1 in 100 and to an astounding 1 in 10 in different parts of our province. The disability that are a reality of those with FASD must be dealt with as well, the secondary disabilities that is.

Mr. Speaker, the \$1 million that has been promised sounds like a lot of money, but I am waiting with bated breath to see if this is new money. Is this government going to fund the diagnostic centre that is urgently required in Regina, and what is the plan for the rest of the province?

What about the needs in the schools, the specific needs of children with FASD in our education system, and of course the huge issue of youth and adults in our criminal justice system, in our jails, and on our streets? What is the government's plan to support these young people to overcome the disadvantages placed on them through no fault of their own? What is this government's plan to help the people in their attempt to live as normal a life as is possible? I really do commend this initiative.

But saying that, Mr. Speaker, I must say that as I address this 2004 budget on behalf of the people from Kelvington-Wadena constituency, I have never felt more confident that I speak for the greatest majority of them when I say, I will not support this budget.

I have listened intently as many of my colleagues have articulated over and over, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite, how this budget so detrimentally affects every person in this province. My colleagues have used every descriptive phrase and many of the emotions possible to reach the 28 members opposite — the members that have decided that this budget will make a positive difference to the lives of people in Saskatchewan; members across this floor who have decided this budget will fix the ills of the province of Saskatchewan.

But I believe, Mr. Speaker, if this budget had to be described in just one word, the one word that would come closest to adequately explaining the document is regressive. The haphazard attempts that we've seen in this budget to solve the problems facing the province are coming from a government that is absolutely clueless about what to do — what to do about a failing economy, what to do about deteriorating infrastructures, and what to do about the population decrease.

How could anyone believe that raising the PST 1 per cent could solve anything? Please tell the people of Kelvington-Wadena how closing hospitals, closing long-term care beds, closing rural service centres, closing extension services branches, and adding more taxes is going to help them. Mr. Speaker, how can any of these decisions turn our province around?

Every day since this budget was introduced, members across the floor have been expounding the virtues of the spending decisions. They've talked about difficult spending decisions and have tried to defend the budget based on their determination of the balance between social values and financial necessities. They have yet to realize that a fundamental change in the philosophy of governing is the only answer.

I think we should explore some of the realities of this province. The first one is the financial reality. No one, no one in the province now denies that we have a fourth straight deficit budget — \$1.6 billion of deficit budget in the last three years. Our debt is over \$20 billion, Mr. Speaker, higher than it was when this government took power in 1991. At that time it was \$17.6 billion.

There is no denying the government spending is out of control. There's no denying that the government is spending more money than they are taking in, even when you consider the \$136 million more they are taking in with this latest PST increase.

(14:45)

The government is spending 22 per cent more today than it did in 1999. If you ask anyone in Saskatchewan if they believe they have benefited by this 22 per cent increase in government spending, I defy you to find one person who will agree with you.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people might have put up with this. They might have agreed that tax increases were necessary if — and I underline the word if — if the government had, one, been honest and upfront with them last November; and two, if people could see that their money was being spent wisely.

I'll go back to the honesty issue in a minute, Mr. Speaker, but first let's talk about how the government spends our hard-earned tax dollars. The socialist government that's been in power for 44 out of the last 60 years have tried to pretend that they are the defenders of the weak. This government's programs and philosophies are supposed to ensure a better quality of life for all our citizens.

I think we should ask our seniors or our union workers and our non-union workers, our farmers, and our single moms, and our disadvantaged. Let's ask them: how's it working for you? Let's ask our Natives who live in homes that are considered to be less than adequate. Let's ask those who have an average of five people per household or up to as many as 11 people per household while the rest of Saskatchewan people have an average of 2.7. Let's ask them how the budget's working for them.

Mr. Speaker, 55.9 per cent of Aboriginal children live in poverty — nearly 56 per cent of Aboriginal children live in poverty. In Saskatoon the rate is 61.7 per cent, and Regina the rate is 61.3 per cent. Forty-seven per cent of Aboriginal students graduate from grade 12 as compared with 80 per cent of the rest of the population; 60.4 per cent of First Nations students 15 years of age and older have not completed high school. Aboriginals suffer three times the incidence of diabetes and have a higher incidence of tuberculosis and lung cancers

than the rest of society. They have a life expectancy that is five times shorter than other Canadians.

How is this budget addressing the poverty issues, the education issues, the health issues, the housing issues, and the employment issues of all of Saskatchewan residents?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the members opposite about some of the facts that we live with here in Saskatchewan. Facts that every person in this great province wakes up to every morning and they carry as a burden on their shoulder because they take it for granted that living in this province is part, is what happens in Saskatchewan because of spending decisions and decisions that are made by people on that side of the House. People with a very slim majority that have affected the life of every one of Saskatchewan's residents.

Mr. Speaker, ask the seniors that have been on a hospital waiting list for two and a half years if this government, as the so-called defender of health care, is working for them. Try and reassure them that this government will remember that even Mr. Romanow admitted that health care cutbacks went too far.

Just ask the couple who fought for three years to live in the same home care in Moosomin how it's working for them.

Just ask anyone who's had to have an ambulance to get to a city hospital, or anyone who bears the cost of travel and staying in a hotel overnight for a specialist appointment. How's it working for them?

Let us talk to the farmers who have been dealing with drought and increased crop insurance costs and an 80 per cent decrease in the price they get for the livestock. How's it working for them?

Mr. Speaker, for every dollar spent on food in Canada, our farmers get just 21 cents. Food Freedom Day in Canada is February 7. That's the day the average Canadian makes all the money they need to buy groceries for a full year. But do you know what's even scarier? January 9 is the day that the average Canadian farmer . . . the average Canadian has earned enough money to pay the farmer for all the food they're going to eat. January 9 they pay for all the food to the farmer and . . . But you know what July 12 is? July 12 is Tax Freedom Day. That's the day we stop feeding the government for their voracious appetite of taxes. January 9 we finish feeding the farmer; July 12 we finish feeding the government.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. members from Saskatchewan Rivers and the Minister of Agriculture spoke about farming in poetry today and yesterday. It was fanciful and touched many hearts. We on this side of the House know that. We also know the reality of living on a farm today. We know the reality of the young man in Dafoe that came up to me on Monday when I drove here and said, I have a cheque here for \$9,000 for 24 head of cattle — 24 head of cattle, Mr. Speaker, that two years ago or a year ago would have brought them probably closer to \$30,000.

And they also ask me why this government can't find the money to put into CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) to pay the money that they were guaranteed. The letter that they received from this government guaranteed it. They were going



to get this amount of money and they took it to their banks and they based their spending priorities on this money. And the government said, oops, I changed my mind — the very same way they did with the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contract a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan we are ashamed to admit that we have titles that bear recognition right across Canada, and it's titles that we really are not proud of.

We had the highest youth incarceration rate in Canada. We had the second highest rate of drug-related offences in Canada. Here in Saskatchewan the food bank demands went up by 11 per cent in the last year. Saskatchewan has the second highest proportion of gamblers in Canada.

And you know what one of the facts is that really bothers me? If you're an Aboriginal boy in Saskatchewan today, you have a better chance of going to jail than completing public school.

One of the scariest and most embarrassing and disgusting facts that we as Canadian residents live with because of our government is our child poverty numbers. The number of Saskatchewan children living in poverty is far outpacing the national average. Over 40,000 of our children live in poverty. Mr. Speaker, how is the budget addressing this?

There is nothing in the Speech from the Throne or in the budget speech that gives me any hope that this government knows how to deal with the issues. The image that comes to mind when I look across the Assembly at the group of people who've connived their way into government is the deer in the headlights look. You know, that what do I do now look. The men and women who make up the NDP government have no clue what to do now they have power because they never intended to get back into power.

There is no vision, there is no plan in the speeches. And because of that, Mr. Speaker, there's no hope. We cannot recycle the new PST money to breathe hope into the economy. There is no new money to continue to provide the much-needed social programs. We have to add new dollars to the economy.

As many of my colleagues have said, we cannot stop the flow of people from this province and continue to provide the much-needed social programs by recycling the few dollars that we have within our provincial boundaries. This is a global economy. The province doesn't have a wall to wrap around it to keep people in and out, although maybe it does keep the people out. But the wall didn't even work for East Berlin, Mr. Speaker.

We must use the precious, God-given natural resources to bring new dollars into Saskatchewan, to invite investment. These are the dollars that are the secret weapon in providing health care and education programs that we need so desperately. These are the dollars we need so we can allocate money to the young mother who needs a hand from society for a few months so she can get back on her feet and is able to contribute. These are the dollars we need to build our infrastructure, our water services, our highways, and even our parks.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members opposite, is this as big as you can dream? Is this budget supposed to inspire our young people

and our farmers and our business people to put their backs to the wall for another day and work because tomorrow is going to be so much better? I think not.

I caution this government that what this budget actually did was slap the faces of people, especially in rural Saskatchewan. They didn't vote for the NDP government and now they're being punished — punished for not succumbing to fear tactics used in the election, for not believing the blatant untruth in the NDP platform, and for being able to see through the fraudulent promises and not sending an NDP member to Regina.

And I also wonder if that's the real goal, to move everyone into the inner city because there's nowhere else to go, no facilities or no infrastructure anywhere else. Is that really the ultimate goal? To have everyone so reliant on government that they will elect NDP MLAs until there is nothing left of our beautiful province.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this government can't understand the philosophy of growing the province. They've tried for 11 years now to decide why we don't have more people, why the young people are leaving the province, why our debt is going up and our deficit is going up. They don't get it. The member from Saskatchewan Rivers just tried to talk about it. He didn't understand the growing philosophy. Well every other province does and every other province is growing except Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers also talked about e-mails that you get every morning and I think maybe he would be interested in the one that I received just this morning:

The government speaks two different languages. They used both during the election campaign. The NDP election platform was full of promises stated in a very general way together with political rhetoric (and bad political rhetoric, I might add), in a way that would leave the electorate with the "impression" that everything . . . (was) just lovely. They formed an EXPECTATION LEVEL. The other language they use is when they attack the . . . (Saskatchewan) Party in . . . (their) fear-mongering campaign.

Then all of a sudden they are very concise. They use terminology that can be spoken in lay terms leaving absolutely no doubt in anyone's mind what they mean. I don't need to cite all the examples; they're out there.

During the budget debate the NDP repeatedly states that really tough decisions had to be made as though that makes it okay for the election promises that now are broken. Well it's not okay. What this province needs is medical doctors, not spin doctors.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in this legislature loves the province. We all know that it has the potential to be the best place in the world to live. The only problem is the NDP government's lack of the ability to just plain govern — not interfere, not compete — just provide the infrastructure and the atmosphere for people to do what they know in their heart they can do, prosper personally, so in turn the province can prosper; not the other way around.

I've heard the members opposite talk about a green and prosperous society. Well I think it's grim and preposterous. I

thing it's preposterous that this budget can be considered to work at all and I will not be supporting this budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Meadow Lake, the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into the budget debate. And first of all, I have not had the opportunity to stand up and speak through the Throne Speech, and I want to extend my congratulations to you as well. I want to also extend my congratulations to the Minister of Finance for delivering what I think is a very good budget.

And I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate all the newly elected members on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker. And I say that in congratulating all of the members on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker, I know personally from having been elected a number of times that there is a significant commitment made on behalf of those members individually, and most of all, their families I think make an incredible commitment to the province of Saskatchewan. So I want to congratulate them for that and I want to congratulate their families as well for that commitment.

And I would also like to take the opportunity to specifically, Mr. Speaker, thank the support that I receive from my family, from my son and daughter, Mayson and Meika, and from my wife, Virginia.

I want to congratulate and thank my constituency assistants, one of whom has been with me since the day I was elected back in 1991, Susan Karpenko, and also Adriane Ouellette, who has worked . . . who have worked, I should say, diligently back in the riding in the constituency of Meadow Lake.

And as well I'd like to thank the efforts that have been put in over the years by a number of my staff in this building, in the now two ministerial offices. Thank you very much for your assistance to me and to the people of Saskatchewan.

And lastly of course, I'd like to thank the constituents who have placed their trust in me to represent them, in fact for the fourth time. And this has never actually happened, Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of Meadow Lake before, where a candidate was re-elected four times. And I'm humbled by that and I thank them most sincerely for giving me that opportunity.

I want to talk a little bit if I could, Mr. Speaker, about my constituency as well. It has changed geographically in a fairly significant way and has moved as I describe it, geographically to the east. There were First Nations like Onion Lake, Ministikwan, and Big Island Lake Cree Nation First Nations in the riding. Paradise Hill and also Pierceland were in my riding — they no longer are. And I want to say to all of those good folks that I was able to represent over the last 12 years, thank you very much for the opportunity to represent you and I have made many wonderful friendships with those good folks and often will be back in those communities to see them again.

And I want to also, if I could, say welcome and I look forward to representing people from the Witchehan Lake, Pelican Lake,

and also of course from the Thunderchild First Nations. It is and has been a wonderful experience to get to know many of these good folks and I look forward to representing them for many years. And to also the communities of Chitek Lake and Leoville; it was great to go around and knock on your doors during the election and get to know you a little bit.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say just while I'm on this theme, I've talked a little bit about First Nations. In the last election — and I think this really speaks to what happened in the election — in the last election, Mr. Speaker, the provincial turnout across the province as I understand it was about 63 per cent. I think that there is room for significant improvement in that area, but the provincial turnout was about 63 per cent.

In the constituency of Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, off of the different First Nations we had a voter turnout that exceeded 68 per cent, Mr. Speaker — 68 per cent — exceeding the provincial average. So far from the criticisms that have been levied over the years, Mr. Speaker, that there is a lack of interest, there is a very, very keen interest.

And something that was strikingly different to me this time than occurred in the last election was the incredible interest and turnout from particularly young people on those First Nations. They were very actively engaged in discussions about what was going on, and they were very actively engaged, Mr. Speaker, in participating in the democratic process. And of course I hope in fact those were some of the numbers that came out and voted on election day, and I'm sure they were.

So I want to say thank you very much. You make me incredibly proud, and I think we have a wonderfully bright future ahead of us here in Saskatchewan. And I think lots of it will be around our youth from Aboriginal communities, and I say thank you very much to them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — In talking about some of those key people, Mr. Speaker, that helped me from the different First Nations, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about just very briefly because it has just occurred in the last couple of days, a very special constituent of mine who is a very good friend of mine. Tina Merasty was a young woman about 40 years of age who worked very hard in the constituency in many different capacities. And she very unfortunately, very tragically passed away just Saturday evening, this past Saturday evening.

She was a member of the Flying Dust First Nation, and she taught at Flying Dust school. She was an elected board member of the Meadow Lake School Division. She is in fact a member of the provincial SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) board.

Tina was a vibrant and active member as I said of both Flying Dust and the Meadow Lake community. She was involved in many, many activities and organizations just to mention a few of them today, Mr. Speaker.

Tina was also a very close friend of mine and my wife's,

Virginia, and a supporter who worked very hard for me and for our constituency, but not just in a partisan way, Mr. Speaker. Tina worked — I think it's fair to say — for all of our communities, and she built many, many bridges over the years between the First Nations and non-First Nations in our communities. And she'll be very, very sadly missed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say also that I'm honoured today to enter into this budget debate. Despite the doom and gloom, you know, put forth by the members opposite, we truly are entering a special time in the history of our province, Mr. Speaker. As we approach centennial year you can just feel the buzz in the air.

If you want to take it as an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Wascana Lake deepening project. There hasn't been in my estimation a day gone by when there haven't . . . when I haven't seen many, many interested people walking around, watching the project develop. And now with the water coming into the lake you still see many, many people biking around there as spring comes along, and they've really enjoyed the changes. And it's just a really exciting project that I think starts to build enthusiasm for our centennial year. And this project of course culminated just a few weeks ago with a special ceremony to mark the opening of the Wascana Lake.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Wascana Lake deepening project is just one of hundreds of centennial projects currently going on over the province. The anticipation and excitement I think is just tremendous, and is Saskatchewan . . . Saskatchewan is going to be really exciting in the millennium, Mr. Speaker. I think it will be wonderful.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have sat in this House over the past few days and listened to members opposite get up and continuously criticize this budget during our debate. They have said that our government lacks vision, that we have been less than up front with the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about truth, such statements I say couldn't be further from the truth. In poll after poll after poll, Mr. Speaker, the . . . and consultative process after consultative process, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have told us that their top two priorities are health care and education. Health care and education.

And what have we done, Mr. Speaker? We have increased health care funding by 6.3 per cent to a record level \$2.75 billion. This includes 6.6 million new dollars to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and \$1 million for prevention projects, enhanced diagnosis, and assessments for fetal alcohol syndrome . . . spectrum disorder. And I want to also compliment and acknowledge the last speaker from the member . . . from the opposition party for acknowledging this.

We've also increased education funding by 3.8 per cent to \$1.2 billion, the second priority for people in Saskatchewan. This includes 24 million for capital improvements for K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) schools and 16 million for post-secondary institutions, and it also includes the creation of a significant number of new child care spaces, Mr. Speaker.

Is listening to the people of Saskatchewan, is listening to what the Saskatchewan people want and delivering it being straightforward? I would say it probably is, Mr. Speaker. I don't think it's being, I don't think it's being deceptive in any way.

The people of this province have also told us that adequate housing is something that we need to invest in. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have created a \$12.6 million program for affordable housing construction under the provincial housing policy framework — I think an excellent idea.

The urban and rural municipalities of the province have asked us for greater revenue sharing and, Mr. Speaker, we've increased that by \$10 million. We've been told jobs need to be a top priority for the province and have slated 121 million, Mr. Speaker, for job training and creation. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a significant commitment to another priority and I don't think that is in any way being deceptive to the people of Saskatchewan.

People of the province have also told us that what they'd like to see is their highways improved. And we are investing, as I announced this morning to the road builders of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, another \$295 million in the province's roads and highways. And I know the people of Saskatchewan do appreciate that.

We have been told that we should include summary financial statements as part of the budget. And, Mr. Speaker, now for the first time summary financial statements are a part of the budget process, Mr. Speaker. And they were presented here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago.

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to the people of Saskatchewan and we have delivered. The members opposite still say that we are not being straightforward, Mr. Speaker, but I just recited for you a whole list of priorities for the people of Saskatchewan that we've delivered on. And, Mr. Speaker, I say who isn't being straightforward? I think it's the members opposite.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to now spend a few minutes on the issue of vision within this budget. The members opposite say that this budget has no vision. Well, Mr. Speaker, I say let me just talk a little bit about one of the areas where I think there is an incredible amount of vision. And I am proud to say it's one of the portfolios that I represent, that is Aboriginal Affairs. And let me talk a little about the vision within Aboriginal Affairs.

The Aboriginal Affairs portfolio has a program within it called the Aboriginal Employment Development Program, Mr. Speaker. And in that program the partnership program where . . . government works directly with Saskatchewan employers, Saskatchewan people, unions, and our own department to break down the barriers that Aboriginal people face in the workplace. Since the employment development program was created in 1992 roughly, Mr. Speaker, there have been partnership . . . there have been . . . since 1992, I should say, there have been 52 partnership agreements that have been signed with private companies, educational institutions, unions, Aboriginal and government organizations.

As well, the AEDP (Aboriginal Employment Development

Program) has resulted in over 1,700 Aboriginal people being hired, 900 Aboriginal people being trained, and over 4,000 Saskatchewan people — mostly staff — receiving Aboriginal cultural awareness education. And I think that is a critically important component of this program.

In this budget we have increased funding to the AEDP by some \$200,000. And I say, Mr. Speaker, is this about vision? You bet it's about vision, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, because I think it is important, part of my role within the Aboriginal portfolio, we are committed to meeting with various Aboriginal groups and discuss with them what might make their communities work better here in our province both economically and socially. And we have committed to travelling across this province in doing just that.

Through the Métis and off-reserve strategy, we have been meeting First Nations and Métis peoples who live off-reserve to discuss what would make their communities function better. And in the new year we began touring First Nation communities to do the same thing. And so far, Mr. Speaker, with the Métis and off-reserve strategy we have travelled to Prince Albert, Ile-a-la-Crosse, and to La Ronge. And through First Nation tours we have covered most of the Treaty Four area.

It is also I think worth mentioning and noting, Mr. Speaker, that our Premier has also committed to doing the same thing. And through his round table discussions we'll visit all of the province's 73 First Nations within the next four years. And I know he's made significant inroads in that regard already by attending quite a number of the different First Nations.

As well I'd like to say that we will continue to work to fulfill our commitments under the treaty land entitlement framework. And we will do this by working not only with First Nations but also all other stakeholder groups including ranchers and lessees.

You know, Mr. Speaker, before I leave this issue of this portfolio I want to talk about one election issue, and why I received the some 68 per cent that I talked about just a moment ago from my constituency. You know, I carefully read through the opposition's platform in the last election. And on page 16 — I think it was 16 or 18, I'm not sure — but within that brochure buried way down in a little box in the bottom, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was a commitment to First Nations.

And in that commitment — I had to blow it up, Mr. Speaker, to be able to actually read it — it said we are committed, we are committed to respecting the treaties of First Nations people within the context of the 21st century. Now it sounds kind of neat and sounds kind of nice, Mr. Speaker, if you just read it really quickly. Respecting the treaties within the context of the 21st century.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask the people of Saskatchewan: what does within the context of the 21st century mean? You know, and many, many First Nations people asked that question as well. This isn't about respecting treaties within the context of the 21st century, Mr. Speaker. This is about respecting treaties as they were signed, and as they were agreed to 100 and 125 years ago in many cases, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't something that

we're going to respect within a context of a 21st century.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker — and they still don't get it on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, they still don't get it — that's why First Nations people didn't support them. And until such time as the opposition party understands and respects the treaties as they were signed and agreed and understood, Mr. Speaker, will they ever, ever, ever get support from First Nations people. So don't count on it until you change your approach, Mr. Speaker.

And I hope that's one of the lessons that the newly elected Leader of the Opposition has learned. He says he's learned lessons. I haven't seen it, but I hope he's learned a lesson in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

Does this government have vision? Absolutely yes it has vision, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to turn, as the member from Wood River indicated, he wanted me to talk about SaskTel. Well let me talk about SaskTel, Mr. Speaker, and talk about our Crown utilities, some of which I oversee.

At the end of 2003, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel has expanded high-speed Internet service to 237 communities across the province or 74 per cent of the population. The goal is to expand this service to 95 per cent, Mr. Speaker, over the next number of years. As well, 94 per cent of Saskatchewan people now have access to digital cellular service. And, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel invested 121 million in 2003 in improving SaskTel's core Saskatchewan network which includes upgrades to high-speed Internet and digital cellular service. And, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel continues to offer amongst the lowest local service rates in all of North America, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and I say this to the Leader of the Opposition because he may not be aware of this now, but I had many numbers of questions asked in the last session, both inside and outside, about one of SaskTel's new products, *Max* TV, Mr. Speaker. And I'd ask all members to pay attention to this because this is a really interesting little bit of information and SaskTel officials asked that I would pass this along, particularly to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition will probably not be aware of this but every single time the Leader of the Opposition got up in his capacity from Swift Current last year as the MLA and asked me questions about *Max* TV, you know what happened? You know what happened? They'd get some additional 300 calls from people across this province asking if they could subscribe to *Max* TV. You could follow it on a graph, Mr. Speaker. Every time the member from Swift Current, who is hollering across now, asked a question, Mr. Speaker, we saw some 300 increase in the number of subscriptions to *Max* TV.

And, Mr. Speaker, do you know what is even more interesting? I'll let people in this Assembly guess, Mr. Speaker, where the highest penetration, the marketplace penetration on a percentage basis, is in this province, Mr. Speaker. You want to guess? It's Swift Current, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — the highest market penetration for *Max* TV.

So my SaskTel officials say to me, if you could just get that member to get up and ask some more questions about *Max* TV,

we could even exceed further our expectations with *Max* TV. So please do that, Mr. Member. I know SaskTel would be appreciative if nobody else, Mr. Speaker.

(15:15)

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about our . . . Mr. Speaker, no other telco in Canada . . . The member now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure, is going to rush back to Swift Current and even get more people involved in *Max* TV, Mr. Speaker. No other telco in Canada accomplishes the things that SaskTel does. And SaskTel continues to do all of these things while paying yearly dividends to the province of Saskatchewan worth millions of dollars that go towards things like health care, highways, and education. And we should be proud.

Does this government have vision? You bet it has vision, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to focus, if I could, on another portfolio that I oversee and that is Highways and Transportation. We will be meeting our commitment, of course, of investing 900 million in highways over the next, over three years. We are on track to meet the commitment to invest 2.5 billion over 10 years.

And we have accelerated the completion of twinning of Highway No. 1 and Highway 16 from Battlefords to Lloydminster, moving it from an expected completion of 2012 back to 2007. We'll open 53 kilometres of twinned highway on the Trans-Canada East and Highway 16 West this fall at a cost of \$29 million as we continue to work with the federal government to complete these corridors by 2007.

To support Saskatchewan trade with the US and to enhance tourism, we'll upgrade Highway No. 6 north of the US border at a cost of \$2 million and we will protect our investment in our paved highway system by resurfacing 325 kilometres of construction this season, Mr. Speaker. We are also obviously committed with our partnership — 50/50 partnership — on the Athabasca seasonal road in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I want to as well — you know, Mr. Speaker, I am seeing that my time is coming to a close here — I want to read from you, if I could, about . . . I've heard a lot of doom and gloom from the opposition. I want to read this quote, Mr. Speaker. It is a couple of MLAs here, this is what they say. It's out of *The Western Producer* of March 25, and here's what these MLAs say. They say:

That picture — of volunteer burnout, crumbling arenas, hospitals that can't keep doctors and towns that can't attract businesses . . .

You want to know where that comes from, Mr. Speaker? That happens to be two Alberta MLAs — Doug Griffiths and also Luke Ouellette, MLA right from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Mr. Speaker. And what they're talking about . . . Roger Epp, interim academic dean of Augustana University College in Camrose, says:

. . . Rural Development: Land of Opportunity doesn't hide the hurt in rural areas and admits that the government's

so-called "Alberta Advantage" fails to benefit everybody.

"It acknowledges (that) the growth in Alberta has . . . mainly in Highway (No.) 2 corridor, even though that growth depends on the extraction of wealth from the hinterlands."

And, Mr. Speaker, while more than one-quarter of Alberta's gross domestic product is generated in rural Alberta, income levels in rural areas were well below the provincial average. And in fact — this goes back to 1998 — Alberta's per capita income was 21,700 in rural Alberta, but ranged from 13,000 to . . . but it ranged from 13 . . . the average was 21,000 in Alberta, but in rural Alberta it ranged from only 13,000 to 16,000. And few rural residents have access to high-paying jobs and few companies are willing to locate in rural areas because of poor services.

Well I'm proud to say that here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in my own constituency as an example, rural Saskatchewan, we have the Millar Western pulp mill and we have one of the world's, well the world's largest producing OSB (oriented strand board) mill in fact right in rural Saskatchewan. So I think there's many, many good things to say about rural Saskatchewan that are not occurring in rural Alberta, and we should be incredibly proud of that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that through the election for many of us in this legislature, again both government and opposition but it seems to happen more often . . . Unfortunately when you're asked to be in cabinet you get less opportunity to meet with constituents on a day-to-day basis. And through the election I want to thank the many, many people across my constituency whom I got to meet and knock on their doors and often invited into their houses to talk about issues.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know that one of the main things that we talked about — contrary to what's being portrayed by the opposition — we talked about who was the best party to lead and govern this province through what they knew were tough times.

Meadow Lake is a constituency that has a large number of cattle producers. They knew that we were headed into tough times. You can't go through a BSE crisis and a number of years where there's drought and not understand, if you're a farmer or somebody in rural Saskatchewan, that you're in tough times. Who did they trust, Mr. Speaker? They trusted this New Democratic government. Did they know that we couldn't deliver everything? Absolutely, they knew we couldn't deliver everything. But the issue was an issue of trust.

It was an issue of trust about who would manage health care. It was an issue of trust about who would manage education. And I think in this past election it was about an issue of trust around who would keep and maintain our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, to deliver most of those services to rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in this constituency that I represent. And, Mr. Speaker, in the end of the day they thought that in the majority of constituencies.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I stand and support this budget here today, Mr. Speaker, and it is pride that, it is

with pride that I say thank you to the people of Saskatchewan and thank you to the people of Meadow Lake for having allowed me to represent them again in this legislature for the fourth time. And I will absolutely be voting in favour of the budget as presented by our Minister of Finance. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the hon. member for Moosomin.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure and certainly is an honour to stand in this Assembly and to speak to the budget debate which is currently taking place in the Assembly as we dissect the budget that has been presented to us by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's no question that this budget has generated a lot of debate, discussion, and in fact as I've experienced even this afternoon, a lot of anger and hostility across the province of Saskatchewan. What this budget has done, Mr. Speaker, this budget has basically shown the people of Saskatchewan of the betrayal that was presented to the people of Saskatchewan by an NDP deceptive campaign that we just went through back in the fall of 2003.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this NDP Premier in October-November of 2003, for 28 full days, looked Saskatchewan voters in the eye and said his plan was affordable without raising taxes. Even after the election, this Premier said he had no mandate to raise the PST.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just go back to the release of the NDP election platform in October 17 of '03 in Yorkton. This is what the current NDP Premier, NDP leader at the time, said to the people of Saskatchewan as he was releasing his election platform document. And when quizzed, he said his platform is financially achievable and it's financially viable.

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. And it is a platform that provides for the room to receive the recommendation of the Boughen Commission on the funding of education. (He said) It is a platform that is realistic, practical, and above all, affordable.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think if you were to ask people across this province today, they would be telling you that this Premier certainly was not totally up front and honest with the electorate of the province when he was campaigning last fall, and this budget just proves the betrayal of the electorate, of the electorate to the campaign promises.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, did this NDP Premier talk about closing hospitals during the election campaign? Did he talk about cutting long-term care beds? Did he talk about closing rural service centres and laying off 500 workers? Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you remember any of that conversation? Do we talk about . . . Did this Premier talk about any of those suggestions that have come out of this budget? No he didn't.

In fact as I just indicated, he was telling the people of Saskatchewan that the fiscal ability of the province was there to meet the financial goals and visions of the NDP party, as it was campaigning, trying to get voters across the province to re-elect them.

However what we have seen from this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we have seen in papers for the last few days and weeks . . . we see headlines such as, "Budget shows NDP failures." We see headlines such as: fines, fees rise, even dying costs more. Mr. Speaker, this budget was nothing more than a direct hit on the people of Saskatchewan, the electorate of Saskatchewan.

I want to quote a couple paragraphs out of one of the papers that was . . . in fact it's yesterday's paper, yesterday's *StarPhoenix*, April 6:

. . . these aren't normal times in Saskatchewan, where narrowly regaining power seems to have caught Premier Lorne Calvert's New Democrats unawares.

Although winners of political campaigns usually face the tough job of delivering enough of their promises to satisfy public expectations, they usually have a brief honeymoon period to make good on pledges or at least the chance to blame their predecessors for lying about the books as an excuse not to deliver.

But (it goes on to say) rookie budget-maker Harry Van Mulligen's job was far nastier, given . . . his party was breaking just about every promise it had made during a campaign waged on fear politics.

What's becoming apparent in the statements by Calvert since the election and from Van Mulligen's budget is that the government lacks not only a vision about where it wants to take Saskatchewan but that it sorely needs some savvy advisors to help it chart a sensible course.

And then the rest of the editorial goes on to talk about all the miniscule fees that taxpayers across this province will be facing, and in particular as we think about spring and as we think about the re-opening of our provincial parks, the numerous fees that people will be facing that will basically force many people to reconsider the amount of times they visit our provincial parks.

So you might ask yourself, as the paper mentions, all this to save a lousy \$100,000 that would have been unnoticed or even welcome were it taken from — say — the Wide Open Future ad campaign or by lopping a single ministerial assistant position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is quite obvious that this budget is quite reflective of a government that really had no idea of where it was going and where it would go if it were indeed returned to power. And of course as we've seen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government was returned to power with the slimmest of majorities in this Legislative Assembly.

And as a result, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speaker of this Assembly on many occasions will probably be called to break the tie on votes and proceedings that will take place in this

House. And then indeed it'll be interesting to see what happens tomorrow as we vote on the vote of confidence in regards to the budget . . . that my colleagues and I from across this province are hearing of the anger that people are expressing over the budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this minister, when he talked about his budget, presented the budget a week ago, he talked about the fact or he made the comment that this is the NDP's 11th consecutive balanced budget in the General Revenue Fund. However, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . And I'll ask the members across the way just to listen up a little bit; maybe they haven't taken time to read the summary financial statements yet. However the balance between 6.59 billion in revenue and 6.74 billion in expenditures, the government was required to take a \$158.1 million out of its Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to post a meagre \$67,000 surplus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Fiscal Stabilization Fund, as we have come to see over the past number of years, is nothing more than a hocus-pocus way of balancing the budgets. In fact it is nothing more than an account that you and I might have with our lending institution of a line of credit, that if we find ourselves at a short . . . a period of a shortfall within our account, we can go to a line of credit to keep that account moving. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is. In fact the minister says that this fund will be depleted in 2005 and '06. And it has been criticized as a paper account that the province must borrow to draw on.

Mr. Speaker, the one good thing I can say about this budget — or one of the few good things I can say about this budget at this — is that this government has finally recognized that the auditors of this province, as they have called for the past number of years for summary financial statements . . . this budget recognizes and moves us towards that summary financial statement. And as a result and I quote:

Under the new Summary Financial Statements, the government's total deficit, including Crowns and Treasury Board organizations, is shown as \$283.8 million deficit.

So for the minister to stand in this Assembly and tell us it's the 11th annual balanced budget, when you take the overall picture and it shows a deficit, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . is certainly misleading to the people and the public of Saskatchewan. It certainly isn't being fair, and it isn't being honest with the people of Saskatchewan.

(15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I go to another column, and I quote, "What about Van Mulligen's so-called 'balanced budget?' Isn't that good news?" That's the question that's asked:

Well, it sounds like good news, until you dig a little deeper, and find that the balanced budget is the result of a \$158-million transfer from the fiscal stabilization fund . . .

This is the same 'rainy day' fund that the provincial auditor recently termed "just a mechanism to arrive at a balanced budget."

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan said the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is little more than an accounting trick. People think there's money in the FSF (Fiscal Stabilization Fund), and there isn't any there. The reality is when you draw down on the Fiscal Stabilization Fund you increase the deficit. And as I indicated earlier, the deficit in this province is increased this year again by \$283.8 million, despite what this Premier and this Finance minister have said about their budget and how well they have done in balancing the budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I will say is . . . one of the positive things about this budget is that it indeed moves towards the summary financial statements and whereas I quote:

As Provincial Auditor Fred Wendel remarked, there's no where to hide a deficit when you use summary financial statements. "You can't manage the numbers . . . The FSF is just a mechanism to arrive at a balanced budget."

Even though there isn't any actual value in that Fiscal Stabilization Fund . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, it just points out the fact that this government hasn't been forthcoming with the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. And I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why so many people across this province are becoming more angry every day — especially when they see how this budget impacts each and every one of them, how it impacts their lives. And one of the headlines in the papers most recently was, rural hates it, urban likes it. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we're seeing, the rural component in our province is certainly facing a significant hit as a result of this provincial budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government talks about its commitment to health care. It talks about its commitment to education. It talks about the increase by 18 million to the K to 12 educational fund of the province of Saskatchewan. It says this will address teacher salary increases from the current collective agreement on a province-wide basis.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's fine if what the minister is saying and the government is saying . . . this includes the benefit package that goes along with that salary contractual agreement. But if it . . . as it does as we've seen in the past, it doesn't collect, it doesn't recognize the benefit package as part of the collective agreement, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rural residents will be hit again because school boards have no more latitude to move other than to increase to property taxes. And that was and is and will continue to be a major area of debate and discussion in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I can say as well that I'm pleased to see that SIAST instructors have put the well-being of their students ahead of themselves and are back in the classroom. And I trust, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these instructors will recognize that these students have put their trust and their hope in those instructors as they are pursuing further educational opportunities. And as they wind down their educational year and prepare themselves for the final exams that they are into now, it's imperative that instructors recognize that they have a responsibility to the students to help those students meet their goals and objectives.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to ask ourselves, why did we arrive at this place? Why did we arrive at a point where the SIAST instructors felt they needed to pull their services? We arrived there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this government shirked its responsibility back last summer when they allowed a contract to come to an end and really didn't get into any meaningful negotiations until recently.

And as a result of the strike action, the students across Saskatchewan . . . And I know my colleagues and I have received many calls from parents concerned, from students who are concerned because their school year was on the line, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Their job opportunities that they were looking forward to going to were on the line. And the cost of their education, the cost to each and every one of them was certainly something that was impacting them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask ourselves, what is this budget going to do for job opportunities and job creation in the province of Saskatchewan? Let me just quote a little, a couple comments from the NDP election platform. They said:

With your support we will make Saskatchewan the most affordable place in Canada to live and raise a family; provide the best public health care in Canada; build a green and prosperous economy; build a future here for young people. Our vision of the future is a Saskatchewan where everyone, in every region, can participate and share in the prosperity of the province and no one is left behind.

Well I wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how well are they doing. A letter to the editor in the today's paper:

. . . Calvert has admitted that it is problematic that so many young people are leaving the province.

And this person goes on to say:

I was hopeful when I heard him say that he wanted to address the problem by increasing employment opportunities for young people . . . (my hopes were dashed when he finished the sentence) in the public sector. The "in the public sector" mentality is driving the young people and their natural opportunities away.

Saskatchewan's economy is already choked by the unsupportably high percentage of those employed by the public sector. Eventually somebody's got to dig the potatoes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how well is this government doing in maintaining job opportunities or giving young people a reason to stay in this province? I would suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they're receiving a failing grade not only from young people but from everyone across the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well we talk about health care and the government . . . And the Minister of Finance, even today, stood up and bragged about their commitment to health care, about the additional funds that they have put into health care. And yet at the same time in this budget that was just released, the Minister of Finance talks about further closure of heavy care

beds in the province of Saskatchewan and acute care beds.

And, in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just the other evening I was visiting with a gentleman who had just received a hip transplant, and as he was being discharged from the Pasqua Hospital right here in Regina he was told that the ward he was in was going to be shut down shortly. Now we ask ourselves . . . This government said it's going to address waiting lists. Well one has to ask themselves, how do you address waiting lists if you continue to take acute care beds out of the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how do we address the problems of the elderly? And my colleague, the member from Rosthern, talked about that today. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about need for heavy care and compassion in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I want to just talk for a moment about a family in the Rocanville area, Paul and Marcia Shiplack, who for four years waited, after 46 years of marriage were in a position where Mrs. Shiplack unfortunately due to health problems was . . . found herself in the care home. And her husband even though at the same time had been assessed at a level 3 care which would mean that he needed a fair bit of care — and he should have actually had a heavy care bed available to him as well — unfortunately resided across the way. And I read a letter from his son, and this letter was sent to the minister of Health who at the time back in 2001 was a member from Saskatoon Nutana. He says:

My parents have overcome many hardships in their marriage but are now facing not only physical disabilities, but also emotional turmoil, anxiety, and trauma.

He goes on to say that:

It's a national tragedy that in a province that saw the birth of medicare, a person who fought for the freedom of his country in World War II is not able to spend the rest of his life with his wife.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would . . . I had a number of other letters, and I want to read a few quotes that came from some of the students in the Montmartre area in support of this couple. And the minister will be quite well aware of these quotes as he's received a package of letters. And these are some quotes that I took out from some of those letters. This is from the grandson:

I think my grandma and grandpa deserve to live together at their age. I don't think an elderly couple should be split up in possibly their last years.

This is another student:

When I read the story that was published in the newspaper, I started to think why . . . couldn't (they) be together. I thought about it for a long time but I could not find an answer.

One other student said:

I do not think that it's fair, after-all not many people stay



married for that long, and now they can not even live together.

I also think that the Health issue has made me upset.

The people who need long term care should get the beds so they can be by their spouses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I sat in this Assembly and listened to the delivery of the budget and I listened to this government, this Minister of Finance talk about even needing to look at closing more acute care beds, more heavy care beds in the province of Saskatchewan, and then I thought about Mr. and Mrs. Shiplack. And thanks to the Regina Health District the Shiplacks are now reunited in the Montmartre health care facility.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many other individuals of this nature, seniors, are continued to be split up? And in some cases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the couples is in another community. They're not even in the same community because of the lack of heavy care beds.

And as I heard the minister talk about further reductions, it reminded me of them late in 1970s when the NDP government at that time put a moratorium on any further heavy care construction in the province of Saskatchewan. It was quite obvious then as it is today that this government has no vision and no understanding of the needs of the people of Saskatchewan — and certainly people with that need, heavy care. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to be watching with interest exactly what this minister was talking about when he was talking about further closures of acute care and heavy care facilities.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about economic development, we ask ourselves exactly where is this government going. Does this budget, does this Throne Speech give young people in this province any reason, any hope to look at staying in the province, to continue to build on the province of Saskatchewan? I just heard one of the members from across the way, I believe for Saskatchewan Rivers, talked about he's getting tired of talking about growth. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it sounds like this NDP government is content with the level of population we have here today. As one former minister said, the fewer of us there are around, the more there is to share because there's fewer people that need the services.

Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that doesn't pay the bills. Fewer people making fewer dollars doesn't pay the bills. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's imperative that we give people hope, that we give them a vision, that we give them a reason to invest in this province. This Premier talked about that reason. To date his actions speak louder than words and the fact that we have . . . this government has no vision whatsoever as to how they are going to build a province that allows men and women, young and old, to look at investing in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when I think about building the province and the government talks about its social conscience, I think of the number of people that have called my office that have been on assistance — not because they wanted to be there but because that was the last resort due to the lack of job opportunities in their communities — who have been told by social workers that

here's . . . you take some training, and then as you take this training, there's going to be a job there for you.

I have one young lady who told me she was forced to take training under Our Future is Wide Open program that Social Services has in place. And then after she'd taken the training, they said well you now trained well enough, you can go and get a job. And then a few short days later she received a phone call and said, you have to . . . there's a job available for you in Regina tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.; you be here or you're off social assistance. Or basically they didn't say or you're off, they said you're off social assistance because the job is here. However they didn't take into account she had no way of getting there, the phone call came late in the evening, she had no place to even go, and a place to find to live when she got to the city of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, everything, all these platitudes sound excellent but it's time this government started showing some compassion. And when they talk about assisting people to move from dependence to independence maybe there's a step that they need to go . . . add into that program of really working with people when they . . . and giving them the opportunity or, if need be, assisting them to move to the community where the job opportunity might be, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We hear a lot of talk, we see . . . but this talk is followed with very little action.

(15:45)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's quite obvious that my colleagues and I could spend a lot more time speaking on this, in this budget debate. It's quite obvious that we could take, extend the clock and just speak for hours because there's so much in this. However the facts are there are other members who would like to speak, and I will have to say at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is impossible for me to vote in favour of this budget. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's going to be hard for members across the way — some members — if they were really listening to their constituents, to even vote for this budget.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll see tomorrow whether or not there's a conscience on that side of the Assembly in regards to how this government has attacked the people of this province. We'll see if there's anyone who's got the heart to stand up and to support the wishes of their constituents and vote for the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I will definitely be voting for the amendment.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak on behalf of my constituents, the constituents of Regina Coronation Park, and to support this budget — this budget that contains such things as 160 million new additional dollars for health care, Mr. Speaker; 45 million new additional dollars for education; 13 million new additional dollars for agriculture; some other initiatives that I welcome wholeheartedly. Mr. Speaker, I am proud on behalf of my constituents to stand and

support this particular budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trew:** — I am astounded, Mr. Speaker, to hear good speeches, some good speeches — portions of good speeches even from members opposite — but good speeches. I know that members on both sides of the House feel very strongly about the budget and about the issue. And I mean, after all, that's what we get elected for is to speak on behalf of our constituents, to speak our minds. And I congratulate all for having done that.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has troubled me is I have listened to attacks about our credibility, about what we have said, about things like the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Well, Mr. Speaker, most of the hon. members across the way were there before the election when . . . in fact at the time of the last budget, roughly a year ago when it was introduced. At that time the minister of Finance said, in this year's budget we're going to draw down the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. We're going to draw down from the savings plan. And they said, and we will draw it down further this year in this year's budget.

This is what we said then, and this is what we are doing. I don't know how we could be any more consistent, Mr. Speaker, than to announce, put in paper, announce in the budget, and then follow through with the things that we, the very things we've announced.

Mr. Speaker, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund has been put together as we collapsed the Liquor and Gaming Fund, which had been used for decades by various parties, various governments of Saskatchewan. The old Liquor and Gaming Fund was collapsed, and in its place was created the fiscal stabilization savings fund. And we announced that we would be drawing down on it some years and adding into it other years. We've actually had, a year, a couple of years ago, where we had an \$80 million top-up to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that we hadn't planned. But we had a good bounce on oil and gas revenues and we were able to do that.

Well prudent fiscal, prudent fiscally responsible government will take windfall revenue and put it into a savings account so that we can continue to fund the day-to-day operations of government on behalf of all of the people of Saskatchewan. And I'm very proud of that.

We're able, Mr. Speaker, because of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and other things, to . . . as I mentioned, we added 160 million new dollars for health care this year; there's an initiative that includes several million dollars to deal with surgical wait-lists, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of that. I'm not proud that we've got wait-lists, but this is a reality right across this great nation of Canada. It's just one of the realities in health care.

We can do more . . . I say we — I'm not a doctor — but doctors and other health care professionals can do so many things today that they couldn't do even a decade ago or in some cases even last year. And this is just one of the happy realities of our time. And isn't it a wonderful problem that we can have surgical interventions to fix things today that weren't, weren't even

possible short months or years ago?

Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased about that and I'm pleased with the initiative in this year's budget to try and help reduce the wait list. I'm pleased also with the Saskatchewan surgical registry that the Minister of Health, my colleague, has announced in recent weeks, and I'm looking forward to that helping.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the budget and I'm not going to try and extend my speech just to fill dead air. There are some things that I want to say. For example, I want to say that in agriculture I hear, I hear members opposite saying it's not enough.

Well you know I'm not particularly going to argue with the it's-not-enough argument, but I am going to point out that there is a quarter of a billion dollars in program expenditures for health . . . or for agriculture this year. In addition to that there's another quarter of a billion dollars in tax exemptions — in PST exemptions, provincial sales tax exemptions for farmers, and in gas and diesel tax exemption for farmers.

And I hear chirping going on, Mr. Speaker. My only point is to say there's a half a billion dollars of taxpayer largesse for agriculture in Saskatchewan. I am proud of the level of support. Do I wish we could double it? You bet. Do I wish we could triple it? You bet. Can we? No, not in any, not in any fiscally responsible manner, we cannot. We've added 13 million and . . . 13 million to the agricultural budget this year.

I want to point out to all members that the record of this government and I dare say previous governments, but the record of this government in particular is one of when there is a crisis — read in mad cow — when there is a crisis we pony up \$55 million for mad cow, out of budget last year. Extra, out of budget.

When there is a crisis in agriculture we stand behind and with our farmers. Is it enough? I'm not arguing is it enough. Is it enough? Well I am saying simply that we do the very, very best we can. We do the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And my former neighbour, the former leader of the opposition is speaking and I urge you to join, I urge you to join this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of what we've been able to do for agriculture. I want to touch briefly on crop insurance because I've heard much about crop insurance. I've even heard . . . I've heard some people say oh, all the government wants to do is increase our crop insurance premiums. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member for Cannington says, that's what they did. Well the member for Cannington, I am confident, I'm confident that the hon. member understands how crop insurance is set up, on a 21 year self-sustaining cycle.

But I want to point out that our contribution is greater than . . . We pay greater than 25 per cent of the premium of that insurance scheme — greater than 25 per cent. And the member says that's not new.

I want to point out that the two biggest increases in provincial largesse, in provincial premiums paid in the crop insurance

scheme, have come when we've had New Democratic Party governments, Mr. Speaker. It's come while we've been in government, the two biggest increases in the provincial portion of that premium.

Again we can argue is it enough? Would I like to double it? Well you bet I'd like to double it. I grew up on a farm. I've got immediate family still farming, immediate family starting to farm. This is not an issue of who cares more; it's a question of what's responsible on behalf of the people of this great province.

Now in addition to paying more than 25 per cent of the premiums on health . . . or on crop insurance, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government picks up 40 per cent of the administration costs and the federal government picks up 60 per cent of the administration costs and farmers pick up zero of the administration costs of crop insurance. And I'm proud again of that particular contribution that we make. And it amounts to, I believe it's \$99 million this year is our share going into crop insurance, so right in the range of \$100 million.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that I've heard members opposite say government doesn't work; we've got to get government out of the way, government doesn't work for people. And the amazing part of that, Mr. Speaker, is that occasionally that seems to work and occasionally we elect a right wing government and they go out and they prove that government doesn't work for people. What a self-fulfilling prophesy.

I say to all of the hon. members across the way, they can short-circuit this little effort right now. Every one of them could stand up or sit down — just resign. If you're convinced you can't do the job, don't run.

Government works. Government is the finest effort of people banding together to do together what they cannot do alone. And that's what government is about. That's what we're about on this side of the Chamber and we're very, very proud that we're making a positive difference day after day after day.

I have also noted something new in this budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and that is that occasionally some of the members across the way have talked about Roy Romanow as though he were some kind of a saint. And indeed, there's times when members on this side think of Roy Romanow as some kind of a saint.

But it's interesting that members on the other side, who sat in this very Chamber while Roy Romanow was premier, and in those days they said you've got it all wrong; they're now saying he had it right. Isn't that amazing.

I've heard members opposite say Roy Romanow took surpluses and he split it three ways: one-third went into program expenditures, one-third went into debt reduction, and one-third went into tax reduction. And it's just amazing to hear members opposite wanting to live in the past.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of this budget. I'm very proud of the work that we've done on this side of the Chamber. I will be standing in my place tomorrow voting

against the opposition's amendment and I will be voting for this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I enter this budget debate. Yesterday I was up in Saskatoon and the people around Saskatchewan are playing a new game. It's called — name that budget. This government wasn't creative enough to come up with their own name so I went and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you certainly weren't at the synchrotron anyway.

(16:00)

We came up with a new name for it. Here's my entry — the hon. member from Prince Albert can put in his own entry — it's called the bungling budget of betrayal. There we go. That's a winner I think, Mr. Speaker. They're betraying election promises. They're betraying our standard of living of Saskatchewan residents, and they're betraying the future of our kids.

Now if you think that's an overstatement, and obviously a few of my friends across the way do, just let's think back to November and contrast what was said then and what was done last week. And as we do that it becomes very obvious that we should listen to what this government says and then look at what this government does. A real dichotomy, Mr. Speaker.

In the run-up to the provincial election, the NDP government . . . and remember this is the group that had their hands on the books at the time. They said emphatically — I can remember the hon. member from Prince Albert said emphatically — that things would simply not happen. This government stated emphatically that there was no need or no plan to raise taxes. He said there was no need or no plan to cut jobs. He said there was no need or no plan to increase the provincial sales tax; no need and no plan to increase dozens of fees, and no need or no plan to rashly cut services.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government was hoping for one thing — that the people of Saskatchewan have no memory. Mr. Speaker, they were hoping that what they claimed as gospel just five months ago would be lost forever in faded memory.

But even more than that, this NDP government seems to hope that you can exact . . . that you can ignore the fact that they are frittering away our future. And that's ironic because in Saskatchewan we are sitting on such great opportunities, not just for ourselves but even more so for our children.

In Saskatoon for example, we have a great community, an outstanding university, a growing number of career opportunities for ourselves and for our families. And that's the good news, Mr. Speaker. The bad news? That all of these are under severe pressure from this provincial government and this budget that is fraught with the lack of vision for Saskatchewan.

In Saskatoon for example, Mr. Speaker, we finally have a city

council that has a vision that is going to implement a plan. Raymond Moriyama, 25 years ago, came up with a plan for Saskatoon. This provincial government is going to act upon . . . this city council is going to act upon this plan. The city council of Saskatoon, they're worried about one thing. They're not worried about the federal government, the infrastructure money will be there. They're not worried about their own funds because they will make it a priority. They're worried about this government who has squandered funds and doesn't have a plan at all.

Today we are paying the price for what is essentially a dishonest election, Mr. Speaker, on the part of the NDP. We are faced with a budget that is creating a severe lack of confidence for Saskatoon and for all of Saskatchewan.

Let's take a quick step back and think about what this NDP government offered the people of this province. This government stated clearly that there was no need to raise taxes. After all, the Premier claimed this government was managing the provincial economy so brilliantly that the tax revenues were rolling in a sufficient pace that the tax hikes wouldn't even be considered.

Apparently he was wrong, Mr. Speaker. The increase in provincial sales tax was accompanied by dozens of fee hikes. And we don't even know if the fee hikes are done. We don't know if the pockets are finished being picked, Mr. Speaker, or is there more on the way?

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk for a few minutes about civil servants in Saskatchewan. I know the hon. members opposite don't like when people on this side of the House talk about civil servants. Well let's talk about them. Let's see what happened to the civil servants three years ago.

Three years ago this government came in and said come work for us. Come work for us. Come be part of the civil servants. We'll take care of you. We'll do whatever we can to help you along. That was three years ago.

People from across Saskatchewan left jobs to come work for the government, to see what opportunities that would bring. And where are they now, Mr. Speaker? Where are they now? They put their faith of their families in the hands of this government and now they are faced with an employer that can't afford to pay them.

Five hundred people put their faith in the members opposite. Several hundred people made that career choice. They gave up on opportunities to take this one and now all this NDP government can tell them is sorry folks, the bank account isn't as flushed as we promised you — sorry, here's your pink slip. That's the reward they get for having confidence in this government three years ago. They won't make that mistake twice.

The NDP government held out the promise of property tax reform through the Boughen Commission. The statistics show with a clarity that we have a fundamental problem in Saskatchewan with property tax, a fundamental problem with the degree that we rely on property tax to fund education in Saskatchewan.

Compare the property taxes on our homes and our businesses with those in other provinces, and you will see that they are way out of balance. But we needn't look just at the numbers to see that. Mr. Speaker, I ask you just to take a look at the property tax that you pay. I ask all the hon. members in this Assembly to take a look at the property tax that you pay. How much of that is going to fund education? Fifty-five per cent of it. It's a result of years of underfunding of education by this NDP government.

So the provincial government says they're going to solve it all. They go ahead and create the Boughen Commission to evaluate the issue. And there's no doubt about it; Ray Boughen did an excellent job in addressing the long-standing issues, the fundamental issues of concern to Saskatchewan people. But he suggested that there were alternatives, including raising the PST, and in the process reducing property taxes on your homes and your businesses.

What's this government's response? What's this Minister of Education's response? What the response? They liked one part of the equation, one part of the equation and not the other, not surprisingly for the members opposite. The NDP government jumped all over the idea of a sales tax hike, more money they realized. It was obviously just too appealing for them. It was wrong. It was wrong of course, and the minister knows that. Members opposite know that. But it does tell you a story about their motivation these days. It also tells you how far they have strayed from the promises they made a scant five months back.

Remember as well the disaster of the budget that was brought to you by the people who have access to all the financial numbers. There they are. They had all the books in front of them, and this is the best they could do. The people should have known. The question, Mr. Speaker, that we're asking is, did they not know or did they not care? That's the question. That's the question. Did they not know that the money was tight, or did they not care to share that information with you last November?

And finally, is it fair and reasonable for them to now say, okay taxpayers, I guess it's your problem. Not fair at all I submit to you, Mr. Speaker. One might think though that this tax grab, complete with service reductions, would result in a positive bank balance. But it appears this NDP government can't quite manage that.

Worse yet, they're not even being forthcoming with something that most of us tend to think is quite important: the truth about our finances. This coming year the government plans to spend 312 million more than it takes in, and it still wants to call this dismal performance a surplus. What a joke, Mr. Speaker. The rationale is they take money from a reserve account, slip it into the bank, and it magically transforms their miserable financial management into something that they want to pat themselves on the back for.

Mr. Speaker, we teach our kids to be honest. We teach our kids to be honest with money, yet this Calvert government expects us to believe . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I just remind members that we should refer to all other members by title or constituency.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was

back in Saskatoon for a second.

The NDP government expects us to believe that if we are short of money it's quite all right to pilfer our kid's bank accounts, just to go out and take the money just because it's there. They think it's all right to take that money because it's there, even if it really isn't their own money, even if it's intended supposedly for a rainy day. We wouldn't think of using that twisted logic in our own families, Mr. Speaker, so I suggest the government should do the same and not use that logic here.

The big picture painted by this NDP government is bleak. It's devoid of integrity. It's devoid of promise, and it's devoid of hope. It paints, quite frankly, the bleakest picture we have seen in this province for quite some time at the very time when we need a ray of hope. We need to retain and attract talented employees. We need to retain and attract business activity. We need to retain and recapture our kids.

What we received from this government was the most cynical, short-sighted, and hopeless budget in recent history.

Mr. Speaker, it might be nice to believe that, by virtue of living a sufficient distance from the announcement of this budget, that residents of Saskatoon might be spared some of the effects. All of us wish that that might be true, but that simply isn't the case, Mr. Speaker. What drives the Saskatoon economy? Well the list is a long one, but it clearly includes the University of Saskatchewan, our research community, our health services sector, and the entrepreneurial business community just to name a few. Mr. Speaker, none of these have escaped the wrath of the NDP government and their bumbling budget of betrayal of 2004. It's a hard title to say, but it's a hard budget to understand, Mr. Speaker.

The University of Saskatchewan has stated very clearly that it needed funding, that it needed a funding increase of 6.7 per cent. Now that might sound like a significant hike, Mr. Speaker, and it is. But it's important to note that that type of funding increase is simply what is required for the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) to maintain the status quo.

Universities these days . . . And the Minister of Learning would be well-advised to listen. These days universities are under great competitive pressure, more than at any time in their history. They compete vigorously for qualified faculty with institutions from across North America. And not just for teaching, they are vying also for educators who can bring with them substantial research funding. Many of these world-class faculty members, Mr. Speaker, have been able to, through their expertise, to bring research grants to the universities. And the universities that hire them clearly benefit from this. We want these people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and the NDP fundamentally fails to recognize this.

Despite the shell game that was played with the Innovation Fund, the University of Saskatchewan will have 2 per cent more money this year. This translates into several outcomes, Mr. Speaker, none of them which are good. The U of S will be harder pressed to attract world-class faculty. It will be harder pressed to attract students, and that becomes even more acute with this funding shortfall. This will translate into one thing, Mr. Speaker — and the hon. member from Moose Jaw knows

this well because several of those students will be paying higher tuition prices — higher tuition fees at the U of S than at the U of R because of her government.

Mr. Speaker, the government does not take this as a very serious matter. Does the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Learning and his NDP government not understand or do they just not care?

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has provided the Canadian Foundation of Innovation funding for several projects in Saskatchewan. Will this government be there to pick up their portion? We don't know.

We are very, very, very, very pleased. We are very, very proud to have world-class academics in Saskatchewan, world-class academics like Dr. Lorne Babiuk at VIDO (Vaccine & Infectious Disease Organization). Here he is, world-class academic, you know. Dr. Louis Desautels, another world-class academic. What do they spend half their time doing? They go around lobbying the provincial government trying to find enough money to secure their projects in Saskatchewan. They go here and try to find a little bit of funding, a little pot of money here, a little bit of money, pot of money there. It frustrates them. These are world-class academics, Mr. Speaker, who should spend their time doing research, not having to traipse around after different members of this government to try to come up with enough money to fund their projects. They deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, the implications of this budget for the future of our province are disturbing. How does this message from this NDP government play out with students? This consistent lack of sufficient investment in post-secondary funding from the government leaves an indelible message for anyone in this province who has their future in front of them. It says go somewhere else.

(16:15)

Underfunding for SIAST forces students who want to enter a trade to be forced to apply for schooling outside the province. And when they do that, Mr. Speaker, where do they typically work? In their newly adopted province where they went to school. Underfunding for the U of S has been enunciated very eloquently by the president. I can tell by his chirping that the Minister of Learning is now listening. It's an important time in my . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please, members. Order. Once again I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs. The member will continue.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important that members opposite listen to this because it's been enunciated very well by President Peter MacKinnon of the U of S. He tells students at the U of S that neither they nor their institution are all that important to this provincial government. The Minister of Learning says nonsense.

Well let's look at *On Campus News*. I refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the newspaper that the news . . . that belongs to the faculty of the University of Saskatchewan. And I know it's an important

newspaper; I saw the Minister of Learning reading it the other day. And I just want to share with you what the headline of this important newspaper says. It says, the “U of S blasts the gov’t for a small budget hike.”

Mr. Speaker, the U of S blasts the government, blasts members opposite for a small budget hike, “Less-than-2% grant increase likely means (likely means) program cuts (program cuts) & higher tuitions.”

The members opposite ask how much, how much higher will the tuitions be, Mr. Speaker? I don’t know. But the university will let you know.

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order. Order. Order, members. Member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — It’s amazing how you do that. I wish I could do that, but I guess my leeway as a new member in this House is all but expired. But I still want to make the portion . . . I just want to quote a couple of . . . The members opposite would do . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order please, members. Now I’ve asked twice now, and this is the third time. And I ask the members not to interfere with the member’s right to speak in this Assembly. And the floor at this stage is with the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate that.

The quote that I wanted to read from President MacKinnon and Vice-president Atkinson:

(They) . . . say the small grant increase shows the government doesn’t recognize that investing in the University would mean growth and a generation of wealth for Saskatchewan.

The members on this side of the House, we know, but the members opposite don’t understand the creation of wealth in Saskatchewan. But here we have it, one of the foremost academics in Canada, President Peter MacKinnon, talking about it. He’s been honoured by his peers, he chairs groups of his peers at the federal level, and members opposite would do well to heed his advice.

And I quote:

. . . the University is in line for . . . \$2.6 million, or 1.7 per cent hike, over 2003-2004.

. . . “an operating grant (and I quote, an operating grant) that results in an effective cut to (the) University’s budget.”

. . . “disappointing”, since “the government is aware of our cost structure and that we have a three-per-cent wage settlement with faculty this year, and a structural deficit after years after underfunding.”

Members opposite would do well to heed Mr. MacKinnon’s

advice.

The implications for the future of our province are disturbing. How does the message from this NDP government play out with students?

We simply could not pick a worse or more damaging message, Mr. Speaker. In the world that is facing a significant and increasing worker shortage, it’s the last thing that students — our future workforce that represent the fuel of the new economy, Mr. Speaker — it’s the last thing that they need to hear is that we simply don’t care, that this government simply doesn’t care. But that unfortunately is exactly what the NDP budget says to them.

Another item that the Minister of Learning would probably be interested in talking about and hearing about — the proposed academic health sciences centre, first proposed, Mr. Speaker, by members on this side of the House. This would bring innumerable benefits to the city of Saskatoon and the province of Saskatchewan. An opportunity to develop a full medical services industry would be enhanced in Saskatchewan. The synergies between the academic component and the health services component would be greatly enhanced. There would be win-win situations all around, Mr. Speaker.

By the comment . . . And what’s the comment from the Minister of Learning, from the Minister of Finance? What are their comments? Absolutely nothing. What did the budget say? Absolutely nothing. This investment in our future was completely missing in action, completely void in this NDP’s great financial plan for the future.

Similarly, the Innovation and Science Fund is critical for economic future. It provides funding for some of the world-class research that occurs here in Saskatoon and in Saskatchewan. And again, it falls short of the mark. It’s a very significant . . . It’s very significant . . . Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Learning, I’m glad that he’s listening because sometimes when I ask questions in this House, I’m not sure if he really is. But he’s listening. He says he added a bit of money to the pot, to the Innovation and Science Fund. He says he added a little bit.

Well let’s see what Janice MacKinnon says — hon. member, former member of this House. What does she say? What does she say about it? Don’t believe what I have to say, believe what Janice MacKinnon has to say, Mr. Speaker:

In fact, we are spending less than (Mr. Speaker, and I quote, in fact, we are spending less than) \$10 million on the Innovation and Science Fund and it’s a critical fund because it’s the cost that matches federal spending and research.

So there’s a real danger here. There’s a real danger — \$10 million isn’t going to do it.

I think the real danger is that the university goes out and wins national competitions, whether it’s the synchrotron or the UNIVAC facility and makes this city and this province a centre of excellence. They actually win those competitions, Mr. Speaker, for federal funding. But the province has allocated less

than \$10 million to match this.

And, Mr. Speaker, Ms. MacKinnon finishes by saying:

And you'll find that some of this \$10 million is already taken.

What a disappointment, Mr. Speaker. What a disappointment.

Mr. Speaker, we have the experience here in Saskatchewan. We have the expertise in Saskatchewan. These researchers, many of whom are located in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, have been able to attract national or international research funds. And just as often, there's a requirement that the province match these funds.

In other words, there's a significant need for money from the province, but because of this lack of commitment from the government they often throw away this opportunity, because our funding from this government opposite simply doesn't match up to our capabilities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have been quite attentive and I'm really happy to see as many of them here as there are. There might be a few in the members' lounge. I ask them to come into the House and hear this, hear this . . .

**The Speaker:** — I just have to remind the member that he is not to refer to the presence or absence of members in this Assembly. But the member may continue.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a more important, pressing engagement yesterday that members opposite . . . Anyway I wanted to . . . This is an important piece of information that again I'm happy, as many members are in the House as are, I want to talk about the report card.

The report card is in. It's here. Members opposite know that March, April is report card month. They either have kids or they remember when their kids were going to school. March and April is report card month. So here it is. Here it is, Mr. Speaker, from the Saskatoon and District Chamber of Commerce, an independent report card on this government's budget.

They also wanted to enter the name game here, and here's what they put forward: a rudderless ship on a sea of change. That's even better than my proposal, Mr. Speaker, that I think they should win that. A rudderless ship on a sea of change — the 2004 provincial budget of Saskatchewan.

Now I know members opposite are sitting on the ends of their seats and waiting to hear what the report card says, waiting with anticipation. Well I might need some help from my colleagues on this side of the House, some class participation if you like. What is the mark on budget control and debt reduction? What do you think the mark is?

**An Hon. Member:** — F.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — F. What do you think the mark is for business tax competitiveness and job growth potential?

**An Hon. Member:** — Double F.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Okay. You're two for two. Positioning Saskatchewan for a brighter second century. What is the mark, Mr. Speaker?

**An Hon. Member:** — Too low to have a grade.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Growing the province.

**An Hon. Member:** — F.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Funding innovation.

**An Hon. Member:** — F.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — And here it is: reducing the burden of education property tax.

**An Hon. Member:** — F.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Six for six. Congratulations. Congratulations, government. Here it is — six for six. Six for six F's.

Now we haven't even voted on this budget yet and we're already hearing about changes.

Mr. Speaker, I know that teachers in Saskatchewan are a compassionate bunch. They're compassionate, they're willing to give a government the second chance. I submit to you that this government should be given a chance to redo the entire budget. We hear that changes are coming, but let's give them a redo. Let's sharpen the pencils and do what's right for Saskatchewan. There it is, there it is. That's the best example I heard today — maybe changing places would be the best way to do it.

Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, we had a little fun with this report card, but I've never seen straight F's handed out to any provincial budget by a chamber of commerce. They don't do that lightly. They have expressed concerns in the past, but panning the efforts of the Finance minister to the degree that they did, it's unprecedented, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly nothing to be proud of.

It's a little wonder the Chamber of Commerce in Saskatoon and the North Saskatoon Business Association reacted the way they did. Just think of the impact of this budget on the city, on our region, and our province.

Consider the impact of an increase in the provincial sales tax from 6 to 7 per cent. What effect will it have on big ticket retail purchases? Will it shift some of the shopping trips to Alberta now that the PST gap is even larger? We know it will. And the hon. member from Rosetown-Elrose says he knows it will. I know it will. Will it cause more pressure to be put on Saskatchewan retailers regardless of how close they happen to be to the Saskatchewan-Alberta border? We know it will, Mr. Speaker.

On top of all of that, the city of Saskatoon . . . Guess what? It purchases goods and services. Guess what? They have to pay higher taxes too. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? This increases their cost of doing business. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? This

increases the mill rate. It passes more taxes onto Saskatchewan people. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? It doesn't stop there. Guess what? It costs the University of Regina \$100,000 in extra expenses. Now I know the Minister of Learning would know this, but other members might not.

Here you go, another question. What does it cost the University of Saskatchewan in extra expenses, your one little cent PST hike? What does it cost the University of Saskatchewan? Yesterday I found out when I was up in Saskatoon, and the Minister of Learning would have found out as well if he was with me, 300,000 extra dollars, 300,000 extra dollars, Mr. Speaker — shameful. Now I don't have my calculator with me. I don't have my calculator with me, but that 2 per cent minus \$300,000, it's looking less and less, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you, never was a failing grade more appropriately deserved than this government and this budget. The chamber handed out this dubious honour to this NDP government for failing to control expenditures and the debt load, for not keeping us as a province in a competitive way that would encourage job growth, and for failing to position Saskatchewan for a brighter future for the next century.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite ask, but what do you really want? I think it's best said by Ted Mitchell. Ted is the chief executive officer of SREDA, the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority. And he says it boils down to this and I quote, what we really want in Saskatoon, when we know . . . we will be winning when our homes are worth more and we see our kids, and we see our kids in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan see our home as a serious option for the decisions about where they will build their careers.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they just don't understand. They don't understand. They don't understand what young people want in this province. They brag about us having low rates of housing in Saskatchewan. What young people want . . . they want to be able to buy their homes, and they want the confidence in knowing that 20 years from now that house will be worth a lot more.

(16:30)

That's what young farmers want in Saskatchewan. They want to know when they buy that quarter of land that the economy is going to grow and that in 20 years when they happen to sell it, that it'll be worth more. That's what a young business person in Saskatoon wants to know. And the member from Saskatoon Sutherland will know this. He'll know that the young people in his constituency that want to start a business, they want the economy to grow, so they can have the confidence, they can have the confidence in the economy that their investments will be worth more.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question is, what does this budget do for Saskatchewan families? What does it do for the value of their homes? What does it do for retaining their children? What does it do for convincing those that have gone away, to return? I wish I could say it does something. I wish I could say there's something. I wish I could find some positive elements in this budget that would help to enrich the lives of my family and families of the members on this side and families of the

members of that side of the House.

But of course, this pilfer-your-pockets budget, this approach to managing provincial finances, there's sadly . . . there's little to celebrate. Instead the NDP government, Mr. Speaker, is a litany of woes, mismanagement, and missed opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell you a little bit about Saskatoon Silver Springs. I had a great opportunity, I had a great opportunity during the Speech from the Throne to talk about Saskatoon Silver Springs. But, Mr. Speaker, the people in Saskatchewan, the people in Saskatoon, and the people in Silver Springs, they love, they love their homes, and they love their children.

Their homes are everything to them . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker, this is very serious. Their homes become their investment vehicle, their savings vehicle, their way to provide for their children. And sadly a lot of them feel that they're not going to be able to stay in their homes because of a budget like this — a budget that just made it worse, a budget that takes one side of the Boughen recommendations but doesn't take the other side.

And also this budget, it translates into higher tuition fees for those kids, higher tuition fees. And the Minister of Learning says, really. Yes, really. As these students graduate, will they see their prospects as any brighter in Saskatchewan because of this budget? Does it hold any greater promise?

This budget, Mr. Speaker, translates into an even more negative perception of this province by those people who live outside Saskatchewan. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government has made us a first. They've made us a first at something. This crew, they've made us a first at increasing taxes in a very significant way. This is not what we meant, Mr. Speaker, when we said we wanted to be leaders. Does this government not care or does it not understand, Mr. Speaker?

This NDP budget of 2004 is very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. It's a budget of betrayal. The NDP government has mortgaged our kids' futures once again. And I'm glad to see that I've got the members opposite talking. I see I even got members on this side of the House talking about it, Mr. Speaker, and all that because there's a lack of leadership, no vision and no . . .

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it didn't have to be this way. Saskatoon in Saskatchewan sits on one of the greatest times in history. The post-secondary system in Saskatchewan has never had more potential. Our capacity for research and growth has never been greater. Our community is coalescing around opportunities for new development. We have in our community the capacity and the potential for creating a greater number of employment opportunities, the number that we've always wanted. Mr. Speaker, we simply deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the motion and for the amendment put forward by the member from Canora-Pelly.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs that debate be now adjourned. Is it the



pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the Government House Leader, I would move that the House do now adjourn.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned, pursuant to rule 3(7) until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:36.



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