



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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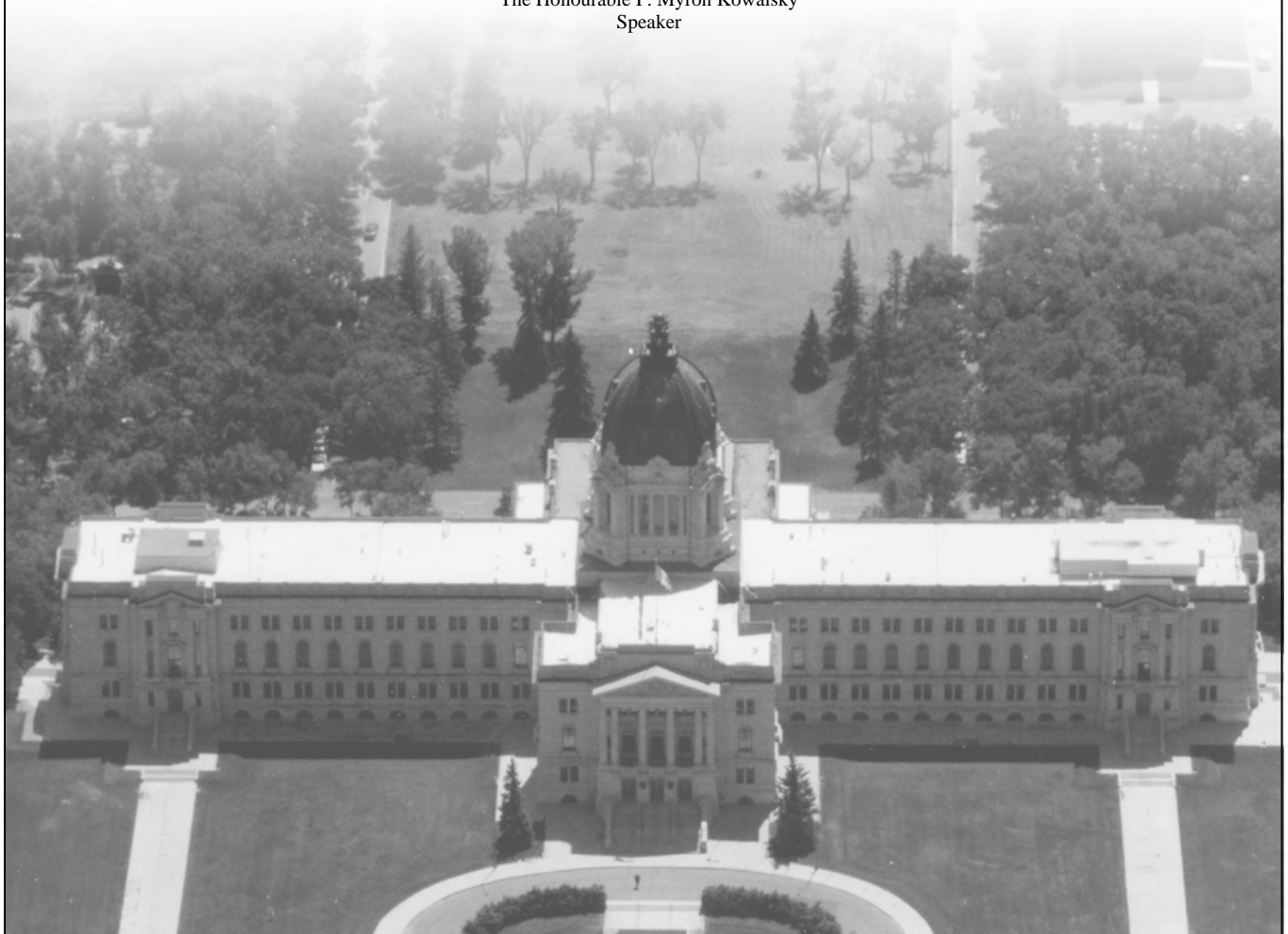
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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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, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, 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, 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
Gantefoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. 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, Hon. 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, 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, Hon. Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Weyburn-Big Muddy

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

**EVENING SITTING**

**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. Thomson that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — Members of the Assembly will come to order for our evening sitting, and we'll resume debate on the budget. And just before we ended the afternoon sitting, the member for Regina Wascana Plains was on her feet. So I recognize the hon. member for Regina Wascana Plains.

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I mentioned this afternoon, it's indeed a pleasure for me to enter into the budget debate on behalf of the constituents of Wascana Plains. I've had the pleasure of serving that constituency since 1991. And as I am out and about and going door to door, I think most people do refer to me by my first name rather than the constituency that I represent, as by respect we have here in the Chamber because we become members who would represent the constituencies from which they come. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would let you all know that all you would have to do is visit the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains to see why this is an important budget worthy of support by all members of the Assembly.

We're part of the rapidly growing southeast corner of Regina and home to many businesses and persons who run their own businesses or people who are part of the executive of many of the corporate businesses that operate within the city and the province. And of course we're home to employees of many of those businesses and of the business sector. We're home to many, many Crown employees. We're home to farm folk and to the north, Piapot First Nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are all well aware of the many efforts we've had over the years to come forward with the type of budget we're able to present this year. It doesn't seem that long ago that we inherited the first year of taking over as government, a province with no budget. And when we did find out what the books were, they did not reflect what had been said would be present for us to be able to work from in our first budget. And we found that actually for about nine consecutive budgets, people had spent \$1 billion more than they had in tax income for the province of Saskatchewan.

So of course in '91, the decision making before us was very, very difficult and a very stressful time to try and decide how we would collectively find \$1 billion of reductions to the budgets placed before us. And it doesn't happen overnight, and it

certainly doesn't happen without a lot of stress and strain on the people who are working with our financial advisors and our ministers of Finance to try and find those kinds of dollars to indeed balance the budgets.

So of course I stand in my place today with great pride in saying that we've laid the foundation for the type of budget that's here today. It's not something, as the member from Wood River would have you believe, that just happens because there's a war somewhere else or that resources are booming. It takes years of planning and tax incentive and targeted tax reductions and, in this budget, the business tax reductions to get to the place that we are today. It's a lot of hard work, a lot of difficult decision making, and it's been done by this government.

Now the members of my constituency also believe the additional measures in this budget send a strong signal of support for future economic growth and a foundation for future jobs. But as the member from Wood River isn't the only one who's out and about in his constituency on these fine spring weekends, of course all of us have many events to attend, and we like to get out an visit with our neighbours and hear what they have to say.

And what they're telling me is that they shake their heads and wonder why. Wonder why what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well they wonder why would a Leader of the Opposition in Saskatchewan go to Alberta and talk down his home province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know I met earlier this year some Tory members from Alberta who attended a fundraising dinner that the Leader of the Opposition had in Alberta, in Calgary to be exact. And what they said to me, they told me first hand, was that they were really appalled when they heard that a person who was in a leadership role within an Assembly in their province would go to another province and do just that. And people in my constituency shake their heads and wonder why.

What they also wonder, they wonder why leaders of any stripe in this province would have such a negative attitude, particularly when they know that youth look up to them as role models and look to them to try and understand and plan for their own futures.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder why. I wonder why the member from Cannington would stand up on budget day and would misquote me in the Assembly about growth in our province and in particular about growth anywhere. He has to drive through my constituency. He drives through on his way home, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and maybe he can't handle all the positive attitude happening in Regina Wascana Plains. Or maybe he can't handle all of the businesses that are popping up as he takes his drive home, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I wonder why the member from Indian Head-Milestone would tell a young Tory MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from Alberta that only 127,000 people are working in Saskatchewan. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even he knows that more people are working in Saskatchewan than ever before in our history. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the number is topping 487,000 people working in the province, and

particularly we're seeing increases in youth employment.

Now the members opposite are saying, where I would get that from? And you just have to look at the budget documents. Maybe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they would spend this week taking some time to look over the positive measures in this budget that's creating more youth employment than ever before in this province.

And of course someone who comes from Irish and Ukrainian background and parents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I and everyone on this side of the House would welcome a new wave of immigration. And we've put measures in place, and we've put dollars in this budget towards a new wave of immigration that's going to come to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the budget before the Assembly, we're building a better future right here. We're capitalizing on our economic successes while reflecting the values of Saskatchewan people. We're working together to make Saskatchewan the best place to live, to work, and raise a family. And with this budget, we've cut business taxes to stimulate the economy and create even more jobs. We're giving young people more reasons to stay right here at home in Saskatchewan with more training opportunities and of course the announcement of the university tuition freeze for another two years.

This government is building a better future for our communities and our rural residents through revenue sharing and property tax relief initiatives and many more items that are within the budget — in fact more per capita support for agriculture in this province than any other jurisdiction in North America, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This government is also supporting our citizens with enhanced social programming and assistance to ensure no one is left behind on the path to opportunity through enhanced social initiatives.

Now just because we haven't heard it very often, as the budget speech over the weekend didn't get as much coverage I think as I'd like . . . I think it's because it's just too much positive news for the members opposite and perhaps even for some of our media outlets to handle. I want to highlight that this is our 13th consecutive balanced budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker; that \$7.1 billion is being spent in our operating in this budget; that we're allocating \$101.9 million toward permanent debt reduction, bringing our debt reduction total to nearly \$450 million since 2004 and '05. Government debt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at March 31, 2006, will be \$7.2 billion covered by Crown asset, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But that \$7.2 billion is a far cry from the nearly \$15 billion we inherited, and it's now at its lowest point in 15 years.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Ms. Hamilton:** — In this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Health spending of \$3.2 billion which is nearly a 10 per cent increase and our largest Health budget ever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was fortunate to be able to be at the Midwestern Legislative Conference this summer in Regina

when a number of the legislators came from all over the Midwest to talk about issues of importance to everyone in the Midwest, including economic growth, economic development, where job creation could occur, education, and health.

There was a speaker . . . our final speaker, keynote speaker was asked — because he's written many books about qualities of leadership in government and in politics — what could some of the delegates there take back to their homes that would be courageous moves of leadership into the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker. His answer: adopt the Canadian health care system, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's his answer.

Because of course, although it's an expensive system when you look at \$3.2 billion of our budget, it covers everyone in this province with publicly funded, publicly administered health care. And it doesn't leave employers having to make difficult decisions about whether they'll hire a new employee because they can't afford to pay the premium for that employee and their family. So it's also a very wise business decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In this budget, Education spending is now \$1.5 billion which is a 5 per cent increase over last year's budget.

And an economy that's growing, Saskatchewan's currently experiencing unprecedented economic success.

It's almost too much, as I mentioned, for the members opposite to handle because they certainly don't come in here or even go outside of the province to sell the economic good news for Saskatchewan.

Mining, oil, and gas industries remain strong, and Saskatchewan is the second largest producer of oil in Canada. We're also the third-largest natural gas producer in Canada. Saskatchewan is the largest potash and uranium producer and exporter in the world, supplying approximately 30 per cent of the world's demand. Our province has a wealth of other minerals as well. One I'm particularly fond of, it's our great potential for diamonds. And of course there are many rare earth minerals that we're just beginning to know about and to talk about and discover, located right here in Saskatchewan.

We've seen a 23 per cent rise in employment within the oil and gas industry over the last five years, and the mineral industry is rapidly expanding, nearly doubling exploration in the past year, primarily in the North, in our North. We are one of three have provinces in Canada, and we're capturing opportunities that accompany this fortunate status.

And of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we always talk to the federal government about our fair share when we look at equalization and the payments that are due to this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Of course my colleague from Saskatoon Massey Place was here to institute one of the major tax reforms in his budget, which was the personal income tax review and implementation which put many, many of the citizens in our province on par with those who would be paying their income taxes in Alberta. And was viewed very positively and still has positive reviews within the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains.

But in this budget, in this budget after our commissioning of the Vicq committee and their report, we're going to eliminate the general corporate capital tax on existing capital investments by July 1, 2008; eliminate the general CCT [corporation capital tax] on new capital investments in Saskatchewan on July 1, 2006; reduce the CCT resource surcharge rates beginning July 1, 2006; and reduce the corporate income tax, the CIT rate, from 17 to 12 per cent by July 1, 2008.

Then for small businesses — the major engine in our economy — we'll increase the small-business threshold from \$300,000 to \$500,000 by July 1, 2008, and immediately convert the non-refundable investment tax credit for manufacturing and processing into a refundable tax credit and extend the carry forward for unused ITCs [investment tax credit] previously earned to 10 years . . . Much further than I think even the Vicq commission would have contemplated that we could go when we're balancing all of the needs and concerns that we need to address within a budget.

I want to thank also my colleague from Regina Northeast. He's been championing for a number of years now; he's been working hard with the government, with the tradespeople. And this year and in this budget, we're able to create the new tax credit for employed tradespeople, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is an important step forward in recognizing people who are entrepreneurs, people who are labourers and work hard for the economy of Saskatchewan.

[19:15]

There's much, much more in this budget in the area of other initiatives when we're talking the province's assisting and delving in . . . demonstrating the enhanced oil recovery process for heavy oil reserves in Western Canada. And it's not by chance that these kinds of things are happening within the resource sector. You lay the groundwork, you work with those communities, and you talk about what we need to have projects like those go forward. It takes a lot of work from a lot of hard-working men and women in this province to accomplish those things.

Helping young people to build their futures right here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in this budget, a total budget of \$1.5 billion for education. There is much, much support provided for new training and employment spaces, for the new bursaries and student loan program, the centennial merit scholarship program, and all of those kinds of things that will help young people believe that they can stay here, raise a family, enjoy the quality of life that they enjoyed when they were being raised by their families right here in Saskatchewan.

There's dollars for communities and farm families. There's dollars to do TLEs [treaty land entitlement] and other initiatives with First Nations and with Métis people. There's many, many initiatives for those who are greatest in need.

As I mentioned, there's dollars for education, health care, and infrastructure. And I could go on and on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our government helped make this good news budget while maintaining a balanced budget — and I say helped because it's with the help of the taxpayers in the province who contribute the money to the funds and want to support this government in

their 13th consecutive balanced budget.

We've provided sound financial management for Saskatchewan. The province has received 13 credit rating upgrades under our administration. It's yet another sign that we continue to move in the right direction. We're continuing to pay down the debt, lift the burden off the shoulders of the young people for future generations. And that's why I'm on my feet tonight with great enthusiasm on behalf of my constituents in Regina Wascana Plains to support the motion before us and to vote against the amendment as proposed by the opposition.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure for me tonight to stand on my feet and give my comments in regard to the budget speech that was just delivered here on Thursday.

First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say a special thank you to all the people in my constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook for their support to allow me to be here tonight and speak to them regarding the budget.

In regards to the member that just spoke, the member from, I believe, Regina Wascana Plains, in her comment she mentioned that in 1991 when they were doing the budget, there was \$1 billion that . . . there was a shortfall. And so they had to make plans as to how they were going to deal with it.

Well if you look back in 1991, if there was a \$1 billion shortfall, now in the year 2006 we have a \$1 billion surplus. What did the NDP [New Democratic Party] administration in 1991 do with the budget? Well they cut the farmers' equity. They cut the farmers' money. They cut GRIP [gross revenue insurance program]. And now in 2006, what do they do for farmers when there's a \$1 billion surplus? Well they cut more from the farmers. There's nothing for the farmers in the budget, but they've taken away more.

Now you'd think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there's more money in the budget as far as surplus, they would have put more money into the backbone of this province which would have been agriculture. But it didn't happen that way. They cut more. So to the farmers that are farming in Saskatchewan today, are they better off? No they're not.

On Saturday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the privilege of going to an auction sale in the Speers area. The farmers that were farming in that area have been there for generations and generations and generations. When I went to the sale and started talking to the farmers, they all came running over to me and some of the comments that were made to me was, why does the NDP hate farmers? Why does the Minister of Ag hate us? And I said, why do you refer to the NDP and the Minister of Ag as hating the farmers? Well he said, what is there for the farmers in this budget when there's a \$1 billion surplus? Nothing. So it's no wonder in rural Saskatchewan, in the ag sector, they make comments like, why does the NDP hate us.

There was another couple of people that came up to me who are small-business from that same area and they also stated, why does the NDP hate us? Is it because the small business and the farmers are private business? Do they hate private business that much that they won't put any money toward the backbone of our province? These farmers have been here for a long, long time.

And my colleague, the member from Saltcoats, has stated that we need help in the agricultural sector. This is the worst year ever in the agricultural sector, and with a \$1 billion surplus, there's nothing for ag. In fact they've taken away from ag. And I say to the members opposite, the NDP, why are you doing that?

Mr. Speaker, the 2006 and 2007 budget cuts payments to the Department of Agriculture and Food by \$166 million over last year.

They also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they needed to add 154 million just to make CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] work, just to fully fund CAIS. And did they do that? No they didn't.

To a farmer in rural Saskatchewan, times are so tough that when they go to their financial institution, whichever it is — credit union or whatever — they need have something backing the farmers in order for them to get an operating loan. Well two things that the financial institutions are requesting is, first, are you in CAIS? The second is, are you in crop insurance?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that . . . how can they take a letter that's saying that they're in CAIS when the government doesn't fully fund it? How can they take that to the bank? Is that any good? The bank managers say no.

The same with crop insurance, they've cut from crop insurance. They've cut from crop insurance \$12 billion from this budget; \$12 billion from last year's budget, they cut. So how is the farmer supposed to operate when they've cut from the program?

But this is our farmers. Maybe it's because the farmers don't vote for the NDP and that's why they're punishing the farmers. But there is nothing in this budget for the agriculture people of the province.

And when I look at my constituency — Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituency hails from Rosthern to North Battleford up to Shellbrook over to Spiritwood — it's basically all agriculture and small business.

So when you take a major cut in the operation of that constituency, it's no wonder I'm getting phone calls. I'm getting lots of phone calls from farmers that are desperate. They don't know which way to turn. They can't go to the banks for financial help because of the programs that this government has instituted does not work.

I'm reminded of the fact that today I believe the Agriculture minister has gone to Ottawa. Now up until today he only wanted \$200 million. Today he comes out, says he needs \$500 million. Yes he needs \$500 million. If he can get that money, that will definitely help the agricultural system in our province

because they desperately need it.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in regards to the budget I have always been one that says I will give credit where credit is due. I've always stated that. And so to the Finance minister, when he brought in the part about supporting the Vicq commission, we all applaud this. Everybody on this side will applaud him for doing that. But the member from Silver Springs has stated that the government has done the right thing by implementing the Vicq commission's recommendations and the Saskatchewan Party's plan on business tax relief. But the tax reductions are only one part of the overall growth agenda. Only one part. There needs to be more to rebuilding this province. But they've started. At least they've started and we'll give them credit for that.

They all should have went further, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And some of the things that must be included in this growth agenda must include creating a competitive labour legislation environment. That must be done. And this has to be implemented now if we're going to grow the province.

The second, the second thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is limiting government . . .

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — Order. I apologize to the hon. member for Rosthern-Shellbrook but the noise in the House is . . . The noise level is getting too difficult. I'm having trouble hearing the hon. member; I'm sure other members are too. And I would ask for order. I recognize the hon. member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was having a hard time listening to myself it was so noisy.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — The second part of that growth agenda was limiting government intervention in the economy. We need that. We can't just rely on gas and oil to produce the \$1 billion surplus that we have now just to grow the province. There must be more added in order for this to happen.

The third one, a long-term strategic plan for improving infrastructure which includes own source revenue sharing for municipalities. We've heard municipalities over and over from the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] conventions complain that they need more money for infrastructure — we need more money. And, Mr. Speaker, many of the communities, not only in my constituency but all over, haven't got the dollars to do the infrastructure. And with a \$1 billion surplus, there could have been more money infiltrated into the system so that there was more money for infrastructure for these communities.

We also need greater economic co-operation with Western provinces to reduce interprovincial trade barriers. Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are right next to the province that has everything, that's probably the top province in Canada — and that's Alberta — and we stand right next door to them. They don't have any PST [provincial sales tax]. But does Saskatchewan? Saskatchewan does. Saskatchewan has 7 per cent PST.

You'd have thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the budget, with the budget that we have in place today, with a \$1 billion surplus, surely to God, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there could have been room for dropping the PST. I mean when the federal government is looking at dropping the GST [goods and services tax], surely to goodness the provincial government, with the \$1 billion, they could have looked at dropping the PST by one point. If they would have cared about Saskatchewan, they would have.

I mean when they adopted the Vicq commission, the Vicq commission said, we need to raise the PST to go for education. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they raised it by one point, but did it go for education? No it didn't. So now when there's a surplus, let's give it back to the people. Let's give it back to them now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another issue that has come to mind in regards to the budget and that is — the member from Wascana Plains was stating about this — the 13th balanced budget. Well in their wisdom they look at it as a balanced budget. But why does the Provincial Auditor say there is a \$288 million deficit? Who's right, Mr. Deputy Speaker? How many times has this happened when the Provincial Auditor said there's a deficit, but yet the government comes out and says, no we have a balanced budget?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the people understand now just how the NDP operates. And I can guarantee you the next time around, when an election is called, things will change. Things will change. And members on this side of the House will take the seats from that side of the House, and they will enjoy — some of them — will enjoy the role of opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in one of my communities in my constituency known as Shellbrook, I feel they've been kicked. And it's ironic that the Minister of Finance's father actually lives in Shellbrook. And I know this gentleman from Shellbrook; he's a good guy. And I do believe that he also supports me when it comes to an election. I do believe that; I really do. And after the budget that the Finance minister delivered reinforces the fact that I know he will be supporting me. It's ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Finance minister brought in some steel-toed boots. Is that what he's using to kick his hometown of Shellbrook?

[19:30]

Well let's look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let's look at the highway maintenance shop in Shellbrook. It's closing down, yet the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] stated in this House, it's not closing down today. He said that over and over. It's not closing down today. Well it may not be closing down today but what about tomorrow? Mr. Deputy Speaker, Green Lake is the same situation. The minister says it's not closing down today. But is it going to close down tomorrow?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the highways just outside Shellbrook are major highways. You're getting the one that comes from Saskatoon, Blaine Lake up to Shellbrook and then north — the only road north going to the northwest. You're also getting a major highway coming from P.A. over to Glaslyn and on to Lloyd. But that maintenance shop is being closed. And I ask why.

You know, there was a few years when the winters were mild. We didn't have a lot of snow. Traffic on the highways was immense, but they didn't have the poor road conditions. The highway people at that time could easily keep up. But what happens if we return to the winters that we normally get? Not like this year when the winters come in the end of March or March 1. What about when the winters come in November? What's going to happen to them roads? How can they facilitate keeping the roads open when they're going to bigger and larger centres to do the maintenance servicing?

From what I understand, they're going to close the one in Shellbrook, and they're going to move the operation to Prince Albert. How are they going to facilitate that part of the road? There's one in Spiritwood right now. They've got enough to do as it is. Are they going to have more trucks and more men? If that happens with the road structure we got, you're going to have more trucks on the road duplicating the same area of travel. So is that better? I don't think so.

Also in the town of Shellbrook, they have been raising funds for a health care facility. I don't know how many years they've been doing it, but I know for a fact they've raised over \$1 million. Richard Porter who's a fundraiser for that area, who has done an immense work of volunteering his time and services to see that this project goes through. And there needs to be some commitment from the Health minister as to what's going to happen with the Shellbrook hospital. What is going to happen with the health care facility to Shellbrook and the community around it? They've been raising money and raising money. They've got their money in place as we speak.

But when I look in the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no commitment for Shellbrook. There is nothing mentioned about Shellbrook. How many years does the town of Shellbrook and the community of Shellbrook have to wait to finally get some kind of a health care facility in the town?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to bring forth a problem with a lady from Spiritwood, and it was brought to my knowledge this morning. A lady who I know very, very well, a good friend of mine, on Tuesday last week, she fell and broke her leg. She went to the Spiritwood hospital, and they shipped her to Saskatoon. And that's what happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the communities around Saskatoon. Everything is funnelled into Saskatoon, and Saskatoon can't take the load.

She went to Saskatoon. As of this morning, she was still sitting in RUH [Royal University Hospital] waiting for an operation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's six days. This lady is 75 years old. Her health is fairly good. Six days to wait for an operation, to the Health minister, is not suitable.

It's incredible that you hear these stories over and over and over, and one comes to light in my own community. Why did this lady have to wait so long to get her leg fixed? I'm sure, I am sure if the doctors in Saskatoon or the surgeons couldn't do it, then why wasn't the doctors in Spiritwood sending her to P.A.?

And I bring P.A. up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because what happened with me. Now some of the colleagues in the Legislative Assembly know that on November 27 I broke my

leg. I needed surgery. I went to Spiritwood hospital. They did X-rays. They said, you've got to go someplace to get your knee mended. It's got to be put together.

So they tried Saskatoon. They couldn't get in to Saskatoon. Hey, it was a Sunday. I don't expect people to work on Sunday, but they couldn't get into Saskatoon. So the doctor came to me and he says, if I can get in North Battleford or P.A., will you go? And I said hey, doesn't matter to me. So he started phoning P.A., and it's a good thing on Sunday that the surgeon was there because he said if you can get in here by 5:30 I will fix you up. And credit to P.A., the surgeon did a marvellous job. He did.

But added more injury to what I already had because I was walking on crutches so long, it was pinching my neck and causing me great discomfort. I've never had a headache in my life, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't know what headaches are. But I couldn't even turn my head.

So the doctor in Spiritwood on January 25 decided that I should go to a neurologist. He says we can't get you for an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], but you have to go through a neurologist first. So he said we'll try and get you in. I said okay. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to read from a letter that I got here two weeks ago, and this is what it states, and I quote, "Dear Mr. Allchurch: You have an appointment to see Dr. Carol Boyle on Thursday, March 15." And I said, I missed it. I missed it. I missed my own appointment.

But then I looked at the letter, and it was dated March 17. That's when it was sent. But then I looked closer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to repeat what I just quoted because it says, I quote, "Mr. Dennis Allchurch: You have an appointment to see Dr. Carol Boyle on Thursday, May 15, 2007."

**An Hon. Member:** — March 15.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — March 15, 2007. That's a timely fashion to wait; it's a timely fashion. It's no wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that many, many people in the province of Saskatchewan are saying to the Health minister, do something with the waiting list. You've got to do something with the waiting list.

Four years ago my son had an aneurism. Twenty-seven years old and he had an aneurism. He tried through Lloydminster to get help in Saskatchewan, and they said no. The doctors said you need an MRI. You need an MRI now, but you can't get one in Saskatchewan. You'll have to wait four months.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought that was just outrageous. So I took what any father would do for his son and I picked him up, and we went to Edmonton. He had his operation. It cost \$455 — which I didn't care if it cost a million dollars, this was his health — and I had to go to Edmonton to get that in order for my son to stay alive.

Now is this the health care in Saskatchewan that's good?

They are pumping a ton of money into the health care system in this budget, but are they going to address the waiting lists that need it in this province? I don't think so.

When I look at my son going to Edmonton to get an MRI and

getting the medication he needed to resolve his problem — and he's healthy today — when I had to pay for that system, is that not two-tier health care? Many people in the province have said, we have two-tier health care. Well I have perfect examples that we do.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to address this. We need to address it now. People can't wait for health care by going to Alberta and absorbing the bills themselves. If, if they have to go to Alberta for a special needs, like MRIs, will the Minister of Health at least fund the money that is paid by the individual to go there? Will they fund it? Will they pay it? Because the way it is right now, we have two-tier health care.

And the people of the province of Saskatchewan, when the next election comes around, will tell the minister that we need health care changes and we need them now.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Regina Northeast.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harper:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's truly a pleasure for me to enter into this debate on behalf of the fine people of Regina Northeast. It's a pleasure and it's an honour to represent the constituency Regina Northeast. I think all the members in the House would say that it is truly an honour and a special distinction to sit in this House and to be a member and represent people in our province. It's a privilege that's afforded to very few in the whole scheme of things, and I'm very proud to have that opportunity.

Now I suppose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of ways — and maybe each member uses a different method — to measure the value of this budget. I like to use my constituency to measure that value. I like to think of people in my constituency and then ask them, how does this budget affect you?

So naturally I think of the seniors, the very people who have lived in our province, worked in our province, spent their life in our province, building Saskatchewan to what it is today — the people who worked hard, sweated, toiled, sacrificed to give us the wonderful province that we enjoy here today.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today those over 65 years of age account for about 15 per cent of Saskatchewan's population. Stats Canada estimates that, by the year 2031, one in four people in Saskatchewan will be over the age of 65. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that come 2031 you and I might even fall into that category.

But this is the importance that seniors have played in our past and will continue to play in the future. And to recognize that, our government has put \$1.5 million into new funding into the seniors gold card which was announced in the Throne Speech on November 7, 2005. Another \$1 million added to the



coverage to increase the cost of ambulance services and maintain the current \$250 per trip cap on ambulance fees through the senior citizens ambulance assistance program. Continued, existing, direct income support and current provincial services that are targeted exclusively at seniors. Seniors access over \$1 billion worth of health care annually in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this budget stands up for our seniors. And when I talk to our seniors . . . and I ask them, I ask them, how do they feel about this budget? They told me, and I quote, "this budget is good for me."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also think of the small-business people in my constituency. I think of them, and I know that 72 per cent of the jobs created in Canada, in Saskatchewan, are created in shops that are owned and operated by small-business people. Small-business people are the engines that drive our economy. And to that end, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget improved the business climate and promotes economic development and diversification, expands employment opportunities for Saskatchewan residents, and including the youth.

Economic growth translates into strong provincial revenues that achieve social priorities. And effective July 1, 2006, the general corporate income tax rate will be reduced from 17 per cent to 14 per cent, and the small-business threshold increased from 300,000 to 400,000. Now that's not it, Mr. Speaker. That's not all of it. There's more to come. Effective July 1, 2007, the income tax rate will be reduced from 14 per cent to 13 per cent, and the small-business threshold increased from 400,000 to 450,000.

Now I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you're saying that must be it. There can't be more. Well there is. There is more. On July 1, 2008, the income tax rate will be reduced from 13 per cent to 12 per cent and the small-business threshold increased from 450 to \$500,000.

Mr. Speaker, this budget stands up for our small-business people in our economy, and this is why when I talk to them and ask them about this budget they tell me, this budget is good for me.

[19:45]

Then, Mr. Speaker, I think of the low-income families that I have in my constituency, and I have a number of them. And I wonder how this budget affects them. So when I talk to them about the budget and I point out the fact that the 2006-2007 budget contains new and expanded programming to support vulnerable workers, they say this is good.

I point out that there's \$6.5 million added, adds over 2,700 new training opportunities, 250 new child care spaces to meet the 1,200 space commitments of Child Care Saskatchewan, and an increase of \$200,000 to establish labour standards collection unit to assist in recovery of wages owed to workers. Mr. Speaker, when I travel my constituency and I ask the low-income families, who are working families and working hard, and I ask them how does this budget affect them, they tell me, this budget's good for me.

Mr. Speaker, I think of our youth, our youth who are going to be our leaders of tomorrow. They're going to be the leaders in our business. They're going to be our community leaders and they're going to be leaders right here in our legislature. I think of those youth and I ask them how does this budget affect them.

Well this budget ensures that youth are going to have the opportunity to live and work in Saskatchewan as a major part of this government's priorities. The 2006-2007 budget contains \$17.8 million or a 7 per cent increase in the operating funding for universities and federated colleges. The province and the universities have reached an agreement to hold the line on tuitions for two more years. Over 2,700 new training and skill development opportunities have been added. When I talk to the youth they say, this budget is good for me.

This budget also contains \$466 million to support the 3,400 training and skill development opportunities and 32,000 university seats. Mr. Speaker, when I talk to the youth they tell me, this budget's good for me.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harper:** — The provincial training allowance has been increased by \$60 per month per student at a cost of \$1.8 million, benefiting approximately 4,900 students in skill training and basic education programs. When I talk, Mr. Speaker, to the students and the youth of today they tell me, this budget's good for me.

Then I think, Mr. Speaker, of Emma Bradley who's only 13 months old and I wonder how's this budget affecting her. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget through the increase of 10 per cent or over increase of 10 per cent spending in health care will ensure that if Emma Bradley ever requires health care she will receive the best of care in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, it also ensures that child care spaces will be available for Emma when her parents require them as they go back to work and she needs to be looked after in child care. There will be the best of child care and those opportunities will be there. As she gets older and requires education, those education opportunities will be there. Whether the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] or post-secondary, she will enjoy some of the best education anywhere in North America right here in Saskatchewan.

And all through that there will be employment opportunities for her mom and dad. Her mom and dad can stay here, work here, raise her here, and quite frankly allowing her grandpa and grandmother the opportunity to visit her quite regularly. And when I think about how this budget affects Emma Bradley, it's quite clear that this budget is good for Emma.

Then I think of the working people across Saskatchewan, the people who day in and day out through their sweat and their toil provide us the goods and the services that we appreciate. Often we take those goods and services for granted. We don't stop to think of the human effort, the loyalty, the commitment that goes into delivering them for our use on a daily basis. These are the people who move our economy ahead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and for that I think of the fact that there's more people working in Saskatchewan today than ever before in our history. New

training seats will ensure a well qualified workforce for the future and we are continuing to see an increase in youth employment.

During the year 2005, 131,000 or 34 per cent of our workforce were unionized. Of the 131,000 unionized members in Saskatchewan, 44,400 were employed in the private sector while the remaining 86,700 were employed in the public sector. Mr. Speaker, when I ask the working people of Saskatchewan, how's this budget affect you, they tell me, this budget's good for me.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think of those tradespeople who for many years now have virtually experienced an inequity in our taxation system. Many of them have to provide tools as a condition of employment and yet they had no opportunity to benefit from our tax structure as a result of the expenditure of funds for those tools. They would buy those tools with after-tax dollars. They would buy them because it was required in their occupation. It was required that they would provide these tools as a condition of employment. And yet they were not able to receive any tax benefit for it, while their employer could purchase the same tools, spend the same money, and be able to write off every dollar of that against their income tax. It simply wasn't fair.

And I had the opportunity to have this brought to my attention a number of years ago by some family members who are tradespeople. And it was one of those things that you put in your memory bank and you don't really call on again until another experience jogs it.

Well a couple of summers ago when I was out door knocking, visiting in my constituency, I had a number of tradespeople bring this to my attention. So I started to look at it with some greater depth and I found out that according to Stats Canada there was approximately 15,000 working men and women in Saskatchewan who were in those types of occupations or those types of trades who had a tradition of the worker or the employee providing his own personal tools as a condition of the employment.

So upon a little closer look at Stats Canada numbers I soon found out that hairdressers, bricklayers, drywallers, roofers, insulators, glazers, painters, floor covering installers, plumbers, pipefitters, gas fitters, carpenters, electricians, sheet metal workers, boilermakers, ironworkers, autobody repair, millwrights, vehicle mechanics, airplane mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, and heavy-duty mechanics all had a tradition within their trades of providing hand tools, their own personal tools, as a condition of employment.

**An Hon. Member:** — Hairdressers too.

**Mr. Harper:** — I started out with hairdressers. It's interesting that . . . And you look at those people who find themselves in that situation, that the costs vary. They will vary from a couple thousand dollars per person to maybe as high as, some reports as high as 15 and \$20,000 for heavy-duty mechanics. So I thought it was something that I should bring to the attention of my colleagues and I did. And I really appreciate the support that all of my colleagues gave me on this issue. It was wonderful to have the collective group on our side of the House pull together and work for a common goal. And if you noticed in this budget,

Mr. Speaker, there was an introduction of the opportunity to provide a tax break to those people.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance for being bold enough to step forward on this issue. We are the first jurisdiction in Canada to go this far. And I think it's something to say that once again Saskatchewan, under the leadership of the fine Minister of Finance, that we are once again leading the way on a very interesting issue.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harper:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, I only have the opportunity here to touch on a few of the highlights of the budget. This is a wonderful budget of all . . . And I've been in the House for a number of years now and I had the opportunity to participate in a number of budgets, but this one is one of the very, very best — there's no doubt about it. Because this budget is so comprehensive, it affects everybody in a very positive way in Saskatchewan. And I am so proud to be a part of that.

There are some things though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just simply stand out when you look at this budget. First of all, this budget is the 13th consecutive balanced budget in Saskatchewan. That is something to be proud of. Paying down the debt by a further \$102 million is something to be proud of.

And when you look at most recent times, over the last couple of years, that's a total of \$446.6 million permanent paydown of the debt in the last two years. That is something to be proud of. The provincial debt is at 7.2 billion. That's the lowest it's been in 15 years and that's something to be proud of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are enjoying prosperous times in Saskatchewan. Our economy is performing well. And the business taxes that we have introduced in this budget will ensure that that continues. We are securing this prosperity and providing the benefits to the people of Saskatchewan through increased property tax relief, increased revenue sharing with the communities, and enhanced social programs.

This budget provides the foundations for the transformation of our economy. It is a budget that ensures no one is left behind on the path to opportunity. It is a budget that continues on a sound financial path. And most importantly it is a budget that ensures Saskatchewan will continue to be the best place in Canada to live, work, and raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I have been instructed by the fine people of Regina Northeast to vote against the amendment and for the budget, a budget which is a road map to prosperity for Saskatchewan and its people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am voting for this budget because it is a budget that is good for all of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Cannington.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, or deputy Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening to represent the good constituency of Cannington.

Cannington is a rural constituency, as everyone in this House knows. Its main industries are agriculture and the oil and gas industry. And so both sectors are very interested in what happens in this Assembly because the decisions made by government directly affect their lives. And so for that reason they pay attention to what does happen in here. In fact is there may even be one or two of them watching on STV [SaskWest Television] or on the provincial channel watching the legislature.

I know that after the speech of the member previously there may not be any left watching, but I know from time to time they do mention that in fact they have watched the legislative channel. So I was interested in the comments that the previous member from Regina northwest was talking about when he ended his speech. He talked about debt and how the debt was lower than it's been in 15 years, you know.

But I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member opposite and some of his colleagues must only be reading parts of the budget book, only those parts that they want to use for their arguments. Because I look, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the book presented by the Finance minister to us the other day. It says Saskatchewan provincial budget, budget and performance plan summary. And on page no. 78 under the summary statements of changes in net debt, it shows a change in the net debt for the year 2005-2006 — so the previous budgetary year — of an increase in the debt of \$244.7 million. That's not a decrease.

Now I'm sure I heard the Finance minister and some of his colleagues saying it was the 13th straight year of balanced budget. Well even the Minister of Finance's own documents don't agree with that. It says decrease or increase in net debt, and it's got increase \$244.7 million for the year 2005-2006 is what they estimated. What happened?

Well we had oil that went from \$20 to \$60 — pretty good return there for the government. And they actually did pay down some debt. They actually did pay down some debt. \$505 million is what they paid. So when they say they reduced the debt, actually for the year 2005-2006, they did.

[20:00]

But what's the Minister of Finance forecasting for this year? Thirteenth straight year — you've got to remember — thirteenth straight year of balanced budgets. So a balanced budget means no debt increases. You might even have a surplus. Well according to the Minister of Finance's own estimates, he's projecting a 288.5 increase in the provincial debt — almost \$300 million more debt in a boom where oil is \$60 a barrel. That's hardly balancing the budget, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So I think maybe his colleagues and the Minister of Finance need to go back and re-read their own documents so that they can explain correctly to the people of Saskatchewan what's actually happening to the debt.

Listening to the member from Regina Wascana Plains, Mr. Speaker, talking . . . she was talking about getting misquoted. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, back prior to the 2003 election, that member said it was statistically impossible to grow the

province of Saskatchewan. In fact is, in talking about the Sask Party plan, she said it was wishful thinking, that it would be impossible over 10 years to grow the province of Saskatchewan by 100,000 people.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that that is wrong. I think we actually can grow the province. But when I look at the population statistic numbers for the province of Saskatchewan, starting in 1999, we had a population of 1,014,707 people in the province of Saskatchewan. 2000, we had 1,007,776, a drop of almost 7,000 people. 2001 — 1,000,134. 2002 — 995,886. You see the trend, Madam Deputy Speaker? Down, down, down, down until 2005 — 994,126.

So you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are continually losing population under this NDP government. This year we're down to, for January 2006, 990,930 people. So that's a drop of about 24,000 people since 1999.

So I can certainly understand the member from Regina Wascana Plains saying it's statistically impossible for the NDP to grow the population. And if she said that, I would agree with her. It is statistically impossible for the NDP to do that because they don't know how to grow the province, and they don't know how to grow the economy. After 67 years of trying, it's downhill, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But not all of this government's business is downhill. When you take a look at some of the statistics in the budget, Madam Deputy Speaker, and you take a look at FTEs, which are full-time equivalents of the government, we see an increase there of 262.4 people employed by the bureaucracy. That's an increase, Madam Deputy Speaker, of 2.19 per cent, whereas from last year to this year, we saw a decrease in population of 0.8 per cent, but we get an increase in government workers of 2.19 per cent.

You know, if the population grew at the same rate that the bureaucracy grows, we would have 1,012,631 people in Saskatchewan. So you know how to grow the bureaucracy, but how about growing the population, Madam Deputy Speaker? That's the problem with this government: they're too busy growing government, and they forgot to grow the province.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, they're busy growing the government and busy driving the private enterprise people out of this province. And fact is, it was the member from Saskatoon Nutana who said the good jobs are in the Crown corporations. Well from their point of view, Madam Deputy Speaker, I can certainly understand that when the only thing growing is government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in agriculture . . . which we know is in a crisis in this province, where you would think that the government would recognize the seriousness of this situation especially . . . I can remember the first election I really watched in this province. Gordon MacMurchy was running — who was minister of Agriculture at the time for the NDP under Allan Blakeney — running around the province saying, we have to defend the family farm, him and Eiling Kramer. Gordon MacMurchy.

Well this government doesn't even know the family farm even

exists any more. We're in the middle of a crisis. The price of grain is as low as it's ever been. And what does this government do? Last year's estimate for expenditures in Agriculture: \$265 million. I remember the first year I got elected, the budget for Agriculture was a billion dollars that year, Madam Deputy Speaker, and now it's a quarter of that amount.

So the forecast for expenditures for last year by this government was actually, because they finally put the money into CAIS to pay for the 2004 year, was \$423 million. So now that we're in the middle of a crisis, what does the NDP government do? Rolls back the agriculture money to 264 million which is less than it was initially last year. And that's their response to farmers in this province — is to roll back the support not increase it.

In fact is they took \$12 million out of Crop Insurance, and yet the minister, all he keeps saying is, it's Ottawa's responsibility. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, those farmers and those families live in Saskatchewan, and it's this government's responsibility to assist them in their time of need — not to ignore them as they have been doing but to assist them.

And yes, the minister today, and I'm told the Premier as well now, has flown off to Ottawa.

Well I remember another time doing that where Roy Romanow and a large retinue went to Ottawa, and you know what we came back with? I think it was something that the Premier . . . I can quote him from about a year ago, a big fat zero because that's what they got at that point in time.

And the attitude of this Agriculture minister to the federal government today is not a very constructive one, not a very constructive one at all. And so while I certainly wish him luck in Ottawa because the farm families in my constituency and the farm families across Saskatchewan need any assistance they can get, I have very little faith in our Minister of Agriculture from Saskatchewan being able to deliver one red cent because he's certainly not prepared to put up the province's money. In a time when the budget is bursting at the seams, they cut the money to agriculture.

They don't even fund the CAIS program to the full amount. The Deputy Premier sitting here tonight was saying that we have to expand CAIS. He went to Ottawa and negotiated with them, demanded changes to CAIS, and finally the Liberal government said yes, we'll increase it.

So what does the NDP government do? Their initial commitment had been \$99 million. The new commitment, as negotiated by the Deputy Premier, would be 165 — I believe it was — million dollars. So the NDP government only puts in 99 and said, too bad farmers, you don't get the difference. Even though they were the ones who demanded it, they didn't put their money up. And when they did finally put their money up, it was a year later. And they're doing that exact thing again in this budget. They're only partially funding the CAIS program while the farmers struggle to just get a crop in the ground.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we see that this government is simply abandoning rural Saskatchewan. You know, you take a look at what the oil and gas industry is putting into this province, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, I can think back

a few years ago and the money coming in from the oil and gas sector of this province was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 600 to \$700 million. The projected estimate of revenues from resources in this coming budget is \$1.5 billion.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you extract that kind of resource from the rural areas, there's a cost to that. There's a cost to the infrastructure. There's a cost to the roads that link our communities and that link those resource sites. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government returns nothing to those areas that are producing that wealth, and those roads simply deteriorate.

I would invite the ministers to come down and take a drive on some of the roads in my constituency. Drive on No. 8 Highway. Drive on No. 47. Drive on No. 48. Drive on 361. Drive on 318. Those roads are virtually impassable. And it's not a new phenomena; they have been for a good number of years, Madam Deputy Speaker. And you take a look across a lot of southern Saskatchewan where the resource industries are the heaviest, and they get the least amount of attention when it comes to roads.

And fact is, the Finance minister, Madam Deputy Speaker, was on the health care committee a few years back, and he was coming down to Redvers to have a look at the health care facilities there, at the group homes. And he phoned and he said, how do I get to Redvers? And they said, well the most direct route, if you come down No. 1 to Moosomin and you come south on No. 8 to Redvers.

Well the current Finance minister found out that those are indeed numbered highways, and fact is they're single-digit-numbered highways which supposedly are best. And he ripped his muffler off in the middle of the highway. That's the state of the road.

**An Hon. Member:** — The Finance minister did that?

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — The Finance minister did. And fact is, he even mentioned it in the House so it's in *Hansard* if the members opposite want to check up on it.

**An Hon. Member:** — Only way to get to Redvers is go down to the States and come from the south.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — That's right. My colleague says the best way to get to Redvers is go through North Dakota. And that is indeed the case because the road from the border to Redvers, until you get about 10 miles south of Redvers, is reasonably passable. That last stretch is rough. Rough is being kind to it. And fact is, that particular piece of road, well it was repaired two years ago, and they did such a terrible job that they've even sued the contractor because it wasn't done properly. And that's the kind of situations we have to drive on in our constituency.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are some serious problems with this piece of legislation, this budget. It doesn't address the needs of people.

You know, one of my colleagues was mentioning talking to an individual who was saying that when he registered his daughter for kindergarten, he should have registered his daughter for

post-secondary education as well because then she would only have a year or two to wait to actually get in to post-secondary education. She would have gone through her one year of kindergarten, her 12 years of elementary and high school, and still only have a couple of years left to wait. Now what kind of an education is that?

The member from Regina Northeast was talking about new placements in SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. Well those new placements are for 2008. That's two years away from now. And how many situations are there? How many of those spots are actually going to provide the training and the education that is needed for the young people of this province? Because the ones we have here today are going outside of this province to find their employment opportunities, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[20:15]

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget fails in many ways. It did provide relief on the corporate taxes, on the corporate capital taxes, and that was one positive step forward. But when it came to actually helping the majority of the people in the province, this budget was a failure.

It's got a few points in it that are a benefit, but overall it fails to meet the mark of what's needed to grow this province, to create an atmosphere of positive economic opportunity in this province. It fails to provide for a reason for young people to stay in Saskatchewan. It fails to provide a reason for new people to come into Saskatchewan.

I note that the government is saying that they're going to have 5,000 immigrants into Saskatchewan — 5,000 immigrants when they didn't have 400 last year. I guess all those people they're hiring to scatter around the world are going to be able to attract those multitudes of people. Actually they're talking about 100 people per new employee in the Immigration department.

So they're going to have to be busy, Madam Deputy Speaker, if over the next year they're going to find and recruit 5,000 new people to this province. I guess you have to ask, since people have such a hard time getting through our post-secondary training because the spaces aren't available, what are the qualifications of the people who are actually going out around the world to try and recruit these people? Are they telling them what it's like in Saskatchewan or are they painting bright blue skies and utopia here? Maybe they should take a picture of No. 8 Highway with them when they go to talk to these people.

**An Hon. Member:** — That would make them feel a lot more at home.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — My colleague . . . well no.

So I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government has failed to hit the mark when it comes to what needed to happen in Saskatchewan. I'll be supporting the amendment, and I will not be supporting the main motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for

Saskatoon Meewasin, the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening in the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly to speak in support of the budget introduced by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, a budget that builds a better future here, right here in Saskatchewan, Madam Speaker, and a budget that — as much as any single budget can, I believe — goes to fulfill the vision of our Throne Speech last fall to carve out a path of opportunity on which no one is left behind.

Now all budgets, Madam Speaker, are not created in a vacuum; they're created in a context. And they're created in a context of the economy, which is a booming economy in Saskatchewan, and they're created in the context of history.

And there's been considerable talk in the legislature over the last little while, since the budget was introduced, about deficits, debt, and taxes. And those are relevant topics, Madam Speaker, and so I will address those topics because they are relevant. And they're certainly relevant to this budget because, as you know, as the members of the Assembly know, the budget includes over a half a billion dollars in interest payments — \$550 million in interest payments on debt. That's more than three points of the provincial sales tax, Madam Speaker. And how we got to the state where we are now, what can be done about that, are all relevant topics in addressing the budget, Madam Speaker.

In 1982, the 1982-83 budget year, the government debt for the province of Saskatchewan as a percentage of the gross domestic product was 2.1 per cent. That is the year in which the Conservative government of Premier Grant Devine took power. And in the winter of that year, December 1982, he said in the *Grainews*, quote: "Deficits are just taxes on future generations."

Now Premier Devine held himself out as being something of an economist. And I don't know if he taught very much in the way of economics, and I'm not sure he understood much in the way of economics. But he taught the people of Saskatchewan one thing, and he taught it very well: "Deficits are just taxes on future generations." And after making that statement, that Conservative administration — in which the members of the Saskatchewan Party opposite supported, served in, staffed — went on successive years of binges, of borrowing and spending, binges of spending and borrowing. And the ultimate result was a government debt as a percentage of gross domestic product which was 2.1 per cent when they took over, ballooning to 41.6 per cent of the economy. The total public debt, 69.8 per cent of the gross domestic product. That, that was the result of the binge of spending and borrowing that the members opposite did when they were last in power.

And they haven't learned their lesson as far as we can tell from speeches they make in this House about spending. But there's no question that they were there and, in particular, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party was certainly there. And as John Gormley and my . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Cypress Hills wants to overstate the case. But I'll refer to Mr. John Gormley's column in *The StarPhoenix* of March 24, 2006. Now Mr. Gormley himself was a supporter of and supported by the Devine administration. And he said of the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Saskatchewan

Party, that he, quote:

... worked 17 years ago as an adviser to several cabinet ministers in the Tory government of Grant Devine. One minister, John Gerich, was among a group of Progressive Conservative MLAs and ministers later convicted and jailed for fraud.

And to a certain extent, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party was kind of the Forrest Gump of the Devine administration. When the minister responsible for Public Participation, Douglas Graham Taylor, was trying to privatize SaskEnergy, well guess who was in his office? The Leader of the Saskatchewan Party. And when Minister John Gerich was accepting deliveries of taxpayer-paid alcohol, guess who was in the office, Madam Speaker? The Leader of the Saskatchewan Party. He was, he was always there.

And that binge of spending and borrowing and borrowing and spending ... And you know it was quite the party, Madam Speaker, but the hangover carries on. And we are paying for the hangover today, to take myself back to the half a billion dollars in interest payments. But those days remind me of some of the words from a song made popular by the Irish Rovers, "Wasn't That A Party." And the words go as follows, quote:

Could've been the whiskey  
 Might've been the gin  
 Could've been the three or four six-packs,  
 I don't know, but look at the mess ... [we're] in

And we kind of do know, Madam Speaker, because we've seen the orders for the liquor. And the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party certainly knows because he was there mixing the drinks.

Now I understand, and the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party has been quoted as saying this: I don't really attend a lot of parties anymore. And to take us back to economic lessons, I think that's the economic lesson that the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party understands. But when you're paying for a commodity, demand drops, Madam Speaker.

Now the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan grew a little tired of this binge of spending and borrowing and borrowing and spending which, as I've said, took us to a situation where the province was near bankruptcy.

And, Madam Speaker, it's been a long time trying to recover from, to recover from the hangover. But today government debt as a percentage of the gross domestic product is at the lowest level in 20 years. And that's quite an accomplishment, and that took a long time. But yes, Grant Devine was correct: "Deficits are ... taxes on future generations." And a great deal of tax has been paid by the people of Saskatchewan to get us back into the situation where we are now, where the province is not bankrupt — as it nearly was when the administration in which the Saskatchewan Party members served in, supported, and staffed, as it was when they were finished with this province in 1991.

And now we are at a situation, Madam Deputy Speaker, where the government debt as a percentage of gross domestic product is down to 19 per cent, projected in 2006 to drop to 16.7 per cent, projected in 2007 to drop to 15.8 per cent, and projected in

2008 to drop to 15.7 per cent, Madam Speaker. And the members opposite, the members who were involved in that administration that took us to government debt as a percentage of GDP [gross domestic product] of 41.8 per cent have the temerity — temerity — to criticize this government which has paid down debt successfully over the years, over the last 15 years, to criticize us on issues of debt.

As this province has turned the corner, as this province has turned the corner and as previous speakers have said, the province has received 13 credit rating upgrades in the past 10 years. And this is perhaps the most relevant judgment about the management of the finances of this province by this NDP administration in attempting to recover from the hangover of borrowing and spending that the members opposite, the members of the Saskatchewan Party supported under the Devine administration.

But it is difficult to actually believe that ... have learned the lesson from those days. Every dollar of revenue that increases, the province of Saskatchewan, whether it's because resource revenues go up or because the economy grows — as has also been the case in the last year — every dollar, they spend five times. They spend it once on health. They'll spend it once on education. They'll spend it once on highways. They'll spend it once on a tax cut. And now they want to spend it one more time, a fifth time — why not? — on debt reduction. And the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party has not yet learned that you cannot balance a budget with a swizzle stick, Madam Speaker.

Now we are now in a situation where we have been able to reform personal income tax. We have been able to reform oil and gas royalties. We have been able to reform the mining royalties. And we're now in a position where we can reform business taxes, Madam Speaker, and create investment and create opportunity and create jobs in this province. But this has been after a long struggle, a long recovery — a long recovery from the situation that was left to us by the members opposite when they were last in power.

And they are critical of these tax reductions because they would do more. There's something else they would do. And what else would they do? Well they've been very general about it. But the leader of the Saskatchewanist party has said, to the same Mr. Gormley I referred to earlier, that he would declare war on labour. And the members opposite have said in speech after speech after speech that the result of this war on labour would be a competitive labour environment. Now I would challenge members who have not yet spoken to explain what they think a competitive labour environment is.

Businesses have said, when they've welcomed the cut to capital corporate taxes that we have proposed in this budget, business have said this is important to us because we can now raise wages. We can compete with other jurisdictions in the country for skilled labour so that we don't lose these people.

[20:30]

The Leader of the Saskatchewan Party has mocked the Premier for suggesting that higher wages to those skilled people in Saskatchewan would be a good thing for the economy. So we know that the opposition doesn't mean higher wages, so what

do they mean by a competitive labour environment? And I don't want to put words in anybody's mouth, so I just invite the members opposite to set out what exactly they mean.

Now, Madam Speaker, the Finance critic for the Saskatchewan Party, the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs, said on Friday in his response to the budget, and I quote: "... the failure of this budget to deliver real benefits for families in Saskatchewan ...". Well that's an interesting sweeping statement, Madam Speaker.

This budget funds 32,000 university seats and 34,000 training spaces, including new seats at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. Now I guess those students are not members of families, in the view of the Saskatchewan Party.

This budget increases by \$3.6 million the child care parent subsidy to provide an enhanced subsidy for child care spaces; 4,300 parents will benefit. I guess in the view of the Saskatchewan Party that those aren't families. Now that's rather ironic since there's children, and children are usually in families.

This budget will add \$1.85 million to add 250 new, licensed child spaces in 2006-2007 in addition to the 250 spaces already added in 2005-2006, but the families that will benefit from that aren't real families by the definition provided by the Saskatchewan Party. This budget will support 670 new families through KidsFirst program. Now I guess the families supported, assisted by the KidsFirst program are not families getting real benefits by this budget, according to the definition of the Saskatchewan Party of benefits and families.

This budget adds \$2 million for literacy initiatives. I guess the people who are assisted by those aren't families, according to the Finance critic for the Saskatchewan Party. This budget adds \$300,000 to expand existing pre-kindergarten programs for vulnerable children ages three and four. I guess if you're a vulnerable child, then you don't belong to a family as defined by the Saskatchewan Party.

This budget creates a new tax credit for employed tradespeople, and I guess they are just not those average working people as defined by the Saskatchewan Party. This budget adds ... [inaudible interjection] ... the member from Cypress Hills handed me a straight line that I think I will not use, Madam Speaker. This budget adds \$6.2 million to Saskatchewan rental housing supplement for affordable, higher quality, rental housing for families and people with disabilities. I guess families with people with disabilities are not families according to the definition of the Saskatchewan Party.

This budget adds \$4 million to the residential rehabilitation assistance program and \$5 million to Saskatchewan's EnerGuide program, both of which are aimed at providing financial assistance to defray the cost of improving heating, systems upgrades, and window replacements in homes. Approximately 17,000 low- and moderate-income families will benefit from these initiatives. I guess those are 17,000 families that are not families benefiting according to the definition of the Saskatchewan Party of families and benefits.

This budget will increase the small-business threshold from

\$300,000 to \$500,000 by July 1, 2008. And I guess the people who own those businesses aren't families as defined by the Saskatchewan Party. And I want to say on this increase to the small-business threshold, Madam Speaker, that it is a commitment of the New Democratic Party to increase the threshold from \$300,000 to \$400,000. And as with many other things, Madam Speaker, you will note commitment made, commitment kept, commitment exceeded, Madam Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — And this budget adds \$52.8 million to increase agriculture education property tax credit from 8 to 38 per cent for the 2006 property tax year, reducing the amount paid by almost \$67 million while maintaining the 8 per cent credit for all property, helping all families who own their own homes — not families as defined by the Saskatchewan Party apparently, Madam Speaker.

And after all the crocodile tears cried by the members opposite about the poor and vulnerable, when \$40 is added to the monthly supplement for those on social assistance payments and the training employment allowance, Madam Speaker, when that's added then, Madam Deputy Speaker, those people are not families as defined by the members opposite, as defined by members of the Saskatchewan Party. But, Madam Speaker, the fact is that whether one is directly touched by a program in this budget or not, everyone in Saskatchewan relies on both the economic progress that we have been able to see in the province of Saskatchewan since the members opposite left power. And everybody in Saskatchewan relies on the social progress that is the vision of our Throne Speech and the vision of this budget.

It is easy to say, and even the members opposite will pay lip service to it, that you cannot afford the social progress without the economic progress. But, Madam Speaker, you can't have economic progress without social progress.

No truly successful society leaves people behind. The only successful societies — not just materially rich, but socially and culturally rich societies — are those who allow every member without discrimination, without discrimination to contribute to the full extent of their abilities. And societies that allow people to live in poverty and illiteracy are not societies with backward individuals; they are backward societies, Madam Speaker.

And this budget — by investing in education, by investing in literacy, by investing in training, by investing in the most poor and vulnerable in our society — is giving a helping hand up to those people who, when they are able to make their full contribution, will contribute to economic progress. And that's the true synthesis between the two, Madam Speaker.

And that is why, that is why this is a budget that builds a better future right here. That is why this is the budget that carves out a path of opportunity on which no one will be left behind. That is the budget that I rise to support. And, Madam Speaker, the amendment is not just wrong. It is absurd, Madam Speaker, to suggest that this budget does nothing for the average person, the average family in Saskatchewan.

I support the budget. I'll be voting against the amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege to stand in the House and enter into the debate regarding the 2006 budget put forward by the government last week.

It's always a privilege to stand and speak on behalf of the constituents that we get to represent, and I'm no different than anyone else. I think the constituency that I represent happens to be probably the best in the province: the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone. From the deep south of Briercrest and Avonlea, through Milestone up to Vibank and Odessa, that area, Balgonie and just south of Regina right up to the Regina limits and to the northern part of my constituency, the Qu'Appelle Valley — I've said many different times that the constituency is probably 90 per cent agriculture based, but when you get into that Qu'Appelle Valley it's like you drive into a different kind of sphere or realm because tourism is so important.

But I do want to talk about, not just my constituency that I am privileged to represent, but talk about the provincial budget as I said that was introduced last week — a budget of record amount of spending at \$7.7 billion, the highest budget that's ever been put forward in this province. And I think if anybody was to look 5 and 10 and 15 years ago, they would say, do we have to spend that much money, up to \$7.7 billion?

Well I will say that in a budget of that amount that there is going to be positive spending, and certainly I would agree with a number of the initiatives that this government has taken. I would be crazy to stand here and say I don't agree with some of the initiatives put forward by the provincial government because some of the initiatives put forward by this provincial government are initiatives that we have talked about for many years on this side of the House. In fact I know that we have campaigned in 1999 and in 2003 on some of the very initiatives that finally the government has put forward.

The government I believe did the right thing by striking the Vicq commission and then following along with most of it. But it was very interesting in the Vicq commission, some of the different recommendations that Jack Vicq and his partners put forward that certainly this government has shied away. They've taken one piece of it, dealing with corporate tax cuts, and I would agree with that portion of the provincial budget.

I would agree with a number of other things in the provincial budget. I would talk about the spending in health care at 3.2. It's increased by 9.9 per cent. The spending in the health care is one thing. I'm going to talk later in my remarks about the whole issue of health care and how we can be spending \$3.2 billion. And I certainly have some questions around the whole issue of where we're going to be in the next couple years, where this money is being spent, and I'll deal with those issues as I get to it a little bit further on in my speech.

I think I could not stand here without commenting on the last speaker, and I guess it's just kind of the last thing that I heard that has stuck in my mind. And there are other issues that were

brought up by members opposite that I certainly took exception to, but I do have to talk about the last speaker, the Minister of Justice, the highest ranking Justice official in our province and how he has a budget of \$7.7 billion to talk about and for at least 7 to 10 minutes all he could talk about were the 1980s.

Now, my heavens, if I ever get the opportunity or if this opposition when it gets the opportunity to sit on that side of the House, let's hope that after \$7.7 billion worth of spending we could speak for 15 minutes on the positives of what that budget is. But the highest ranking official of Justice has nothing else to do but to criticize a 22- or 24-year-old staffer in a minister's office back in the mid-'80s. That's what half of his speech was about. It's absolutely appalling.

And the other issue that the Minister of Justice had the nerve to do is to stand in this House, to stand in this House and recite a song from the Irish Rovers. My God, if you don't have more to talk about on a \$7.7 billion budget, you've got some major problems.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. All members will have an opportunity to participate in debate. I know some members' voices carry, and they don't realize how far they go, but I'd like to hear from the member who's been recognized to speak. The member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that because I think, when they're hollering across, they can't hear what I'm saying, and I think they need to hear what I'm saying.

They need to hear the fact that, when all you can do is quote from an Irish Rovers song after a \$7.7 billion budget, you've really got some problems. When all you can do is look back into the mid-'80s and talk about a staff person in a minister's office, you've got some problems because — quote me — in 10 years or in five years when we're sitting on that side of the aisle talking about a budget that we bring down, I hope I'm not stuck at 8 o'clock at night talking about staff people in various ministers' offices. I think it's absolutely appalling that that's what they would be able to talk about regarding their most recently introduced budget.

What I do want to talk about though is the issue of growth. And we've heard the government talk about this growth agenda that now . . . And the budget is supposed to deal with growth, and I want to talk a little bit about growth because we hear that, from the government side, that everything is wonderful. The economy is growing like mad, and they're really quite happy about that.

And I will say that we are growing because we're spending more money than we ever have before. It's 7.7 billion. But there is growth, and the growth is in pure revenue. Let's not mistake real growth of population and jobs with the growth of just revenue because that's certainly what they're hanging their hats on. All they can talk about is the growth of revenue, but they're not looking at the real issue.

Any government that would stand there and pat themselves on the back like this government does when they have lost a total of 4,583 people in the last year . . . Now to me, if I was to



measure growth, I measure growth on population, on jobs, and also on revenue. But not just one, because when you increased your revenue because of oil and gas, purely a commodity price, what are you going to do when the commodity price drops? I'm looking forward to what this government's answers will be if oil drops below \$63 a barrel because you know what they're going to do? Let's hypothetically put the situation for this government that oil has dropped from \$65 a barrel down to 30 and see how they cope. And they'd be scrambling. They'd be scrambling, and they'd be crying the blues.

[20:45]

Well let me put you on a farm anywhere in Saskatchewan that was receiving prices comparable to, hypothetically, \$65-a-barrel oil or in a canaryseed price at 16 to 18 cents, and now dealing with that commodity cut in half at 8 cents for a pound of canary. If you take the way . . . What farmers are going through right now is exactly what this government will do, will be going through if the oil price as a commodity price drops. And it's not going to be backfilled or propped up when you've got a declining population.

When your population is declining and you're losing jobs, there goes your tax base. I said that 4,583 people left in the last year; 2,500 of those — more than 2,500 of those — were between the ages of 19 and 29. You know, and I think every member on this side . . . and I don't know if those members care to share stories. Every member, I can guarantee you on this side of the House, has a story of a couple that have left just in the last six months. And I know it's no different from the area that I'm from.

I was born and raised in the small town of Lewvan. The next community down is Colfax. There is a family there who, he farmed, his wife . . . they have two young girls. They farmed quite a . . . probably about six, seven section of land in that area. He, Randy, would probably be in his mid-30s and Tina, his wife, is about the same age. She's gone through school, taken dental assisting, so we've been able to help her with her education through the province by getting her through school.

But unfortunately between agriculture and jobs, they've decided that they've had enough, and they've moved to Alberta. They're living just outside of Edmonton. You know, they've sold their home. They're renting their land. But when the government says no one is left behind, I'll guarantee you that grandpa and grandma, Randy's parents living in Weyburn, are left behind. They have three kids, and none of them are living in the province any more.

And continually we lose population. You know and it's just not numbers; it's people. It's people and it's taxpayers, and that's what we need to keep in mind.

You know often we get . . . We look at, for example I'll say in Regina and I'll talk about the . . . I don't know if it's all in the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains because I heard the member from that area speak earlier talking about the number of small businesses that are starting up or the number of businesses that are expanding in our province. Well I happen to live in that area, and I want to tell the members opposite that, don't be fooled by the fact that because we have a Costco and

we have a number of big box stores opening up in the southeast of Regina that that is growth because when we're losing people it's not growth.

We have got a boom in the southeast part of Regina that's phenomenal, and there are businesses starting up there like you wouldn't believe, but there are no more people to shop in those businesses than were shopping three or four years ago before those businesses opened up

**An Hon. Member:** — Population in Regina is growing.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Well the member from North Battleford, the population in Regina is growing. Where's it growing from? Is it growing? Are we seeing net growth in our province? Because we're not.

Do you know why Regina is growing and why these big boxes and a number of these stores are operating is because . . . go outside of Regina and go to Indian Head and go to Qu'Appelle and go to Fort Qu'Appelle and see how those businesses are doing. We don't have any more people buying in this province. In fact we have less. So just because we have bigger stores doesn't mean we have a growing economy. It means that other businesses . . . For example Indian Head had two grocery stores, and you look on the east side with Safeway and Costco and a Co-op and a Superstore and an IGA. Those people from rural Saskatchewan are quite often purchasing in Regina, and it's affecting the small businesses throughout the constituency.

So do not think that by looking at those big boxes that it's growth because it isn't growth. It isn't growth. All it is, is taking from one part of the province, rural Saskatchewan, and moving into urban Saskatchewan. And you know I've heard over and over again, and I certainly am not going to defend, but people in rural Saskatchewan are saying of this government you know they absolutely have lost touch, and they don't care one ounce as to what goes on here. Because I just heard the member from North Battleford say Regina is growing as if that's all that's important.

If Humboldt was growing or if North Battleford was growing, that's all that matters at the expense of rural Saskatchewan. Because quite frankly they realize they're not going to run a seat in rural Saskatchewan, so they could care less, other than maybe Meadow Lake. They have that one. I'm not sure they're going to keep it. But they really don't care about anywhere in rural Saskatchewan if the city that they happen to represent is growing. And that's a very sad state of affairs.

I found it absolutely amazing, I found it absolutely amazing that there is so little mention of agriculture in this budget. Agriculture was absolutely absent from this budget. And I guess it's reflective on where their representation is and where they feel they can hold seats. They feel they can hold seats in urban Saskatchewan, and that's where their focus and priority is. It certainly isn't in rural Saskatchewan.

And it's very obvious that when you hear the Minister of Agriculture and the Deputy Premier — and especially the Deputy Premier in some of the banter that's been going back and forth in this House — that the government would be talking about the current federal minister Chuck Strahl making

comments at a conference in Yorkton. And all they're using out of that whole conference is Chuck Strahl said "buck up farmers." And you know, that is so . . . They keep saying it. And I know the Deputy Premier spouted from his seat; he said we're going to spread that all across Saskatchewan. And that's what he said last week.

This week, they've got the Minister of Agriculture going down asking for money. So on one hand they're saying the Minister of Agriculture doesn't care about agriculture. He's telling farmers to buck up in this House. And then he goes down to Ottawa — thinking that message hasn't got to Chuck Strahl — with a cap in hand expecting relief for Saskatchewan farmers.

I have one word of advice for the Deputy Premier and especially the Minister of Agriculture. If you're going to be going down and if you're going to be relying on agriculture policy, on your total agriculture policy for Ottawa, from Ottawa, maybe you shouldn't spend the first week insulting them. You know, it just doesn't make sense to go around insulting and then going and asking for money. And that's exactly what this government has done.

I need to get to health care and talk a little bit about health care in the time that I have left because certainly that has been the area that I've been focusing on more. As I said, \$3.2 billion into health care, the biggest health care budget that we've ever seen in this province.

I don't think asking the deputy minister . . . and I can guarantee you, asking this Minister of Health, if I was to ask where are we going to be in two and three years . . . is spending on health care going to continue at 9.9 per cent? And if it does, can we afford it? We're at 43 or 44 per cent of the provincial budget right now on health care spending. Can we go forward at this rate?

I've asked the deputy minister and he said, well we really haven't done work on that. We don't have any projections, which quite frankly is scary. I would ask the minister that too, and I hope when he stands for his remarks he talks about where health care is going to be in two and three and four years at 9.9 per cent spending. But you know, I realize that the chances of getting any response from the minister, as far as where health care is going to be in the next three or four years, is pretty much a moot point.

He won't be saying anything about that because we've asked for weeks now if the Minister of Health would please tell us what his projection is for nurses going forward. How many more health care professionals, but in particularly registered nurses, how many more do we need going forward? SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] has put forward their numbers. The minister says that's wrong. He keeps saying that we have done our own work, and we know what the projection is. Well I would just again ask the minister to let us know what his projection is. He said out in the rotunda that we don't want to set a number because we're scared that we can't meet it.

Well that's really quite interesting, and I would agree with the minister because under his watch he probably can't meet it. And it's interesting when you look at when this government put forward job projections from last year. They were projecting 4,800 jobs going forward. But now they've had to reduce that

because they came nowhere close to that number, and they've reduced it down to 3,000 jobs, but at least they had the nerve to set a target. To set a target that they couldn't meet, that's fine. They work towards it into the future.

They talked about, they talked about immigration. They had . . . I don't know what their immigration targets were. Well they're 5,000 right now, but I know it was around 400 or 200 to 300, 400 a couple of years ago. So they couldn't meet the 200 or the 400; that's fine. They've jacked it up to 5,000, but at least they set a target. And so in a year from now if they don't meet that target, they're going to have to re-evaluate where they went wrong to try and meet that target. But it's absolutely ridiculous when you are in a position to set a goal — the Saskatchewan registered nurses are asking for it — to set a target, but the minister is scared to set it.

You know, it's like I can kick field goals all day long if I don't have a goalpost to kick through. I will hit them — 10 times out of 10 I'll hit a field goal when there is no posts on the field, you know. And so you're bound and determined to hit whatever you're aiming for, but you don't have a number set. It's absolutely appalling.

The issue around nursing and the numbers set for RNs [registered nurse] going forward, but I also want to talk about . . . and the member for Saskatoon Nutana stood in the House a number of days ago and talked about how many people that we have enrolled in our RN and LPN [licensed practical nurse] and surgical courses. She mentioned that we have 1,557 people enrolled in the different programs. And she was quite proud of that. I admire that she'd even said a number, that's great.

But you know our province to the east of us, Manitoba, that has about the same population. It has about the same budget as what we have, have a total of 3,000 seats designated for the same . . . comparing apples to apples, for RNs, LPNs, and other nursing professional training seats. They've doubled the amount that we have, Madam Speaker, because we continue to underestimate. We continue to hear the Premier talk about the wee province. We continue to have professional health care shortages because the minister will not say where we need to be going forward. He fears that he probably will miss the target. And I guess if you don't ever set one, you never miss it. But it's an issue that needs to be addressed here in the province.

**An Hon. Member:** — What's your number?

**Mr. McMorris:** — Well the member from P.A. Northcote says what's our number? Well you've got the health care authorities around the province that are under the government's wing that are supposedly doing human resources plans. They're knowing how many retirements there are. We're not privy to those numbers, but I wish the minister would release those numbers because then we would set a target. But when we are not privy to any of the numbers, I question whether the minister even has those numbers. And I don't believe he does because he's scared to release them.

The other issue, it's one thing to have a number of seats regarding RNs and RPNs [registered psychiatric nurse], but when you have the worst nurse retention rate in Canada, that is a huge issue and it's a huge issue . . . [inaudible interjection] . . .

Well the minister is saying we don't have the worst any more. It's kind of like the minister of Economic Development saying we're really doing good; we're losing not quite as many as we used to lose. That's a positive statement coming from that Economic Development minister. I cannot believe that you would stand here and say that losing fewer people than we used to is positive news. I would stand there and say we have lost more people; it's absolutely unacceptable, and we need to change our go-forward plan so that we retain the people we have.

Just like the minister is saying, we're not the worst in Canada now . . . because we were the worst in nurse retention. We're not the worst any more. We're 9 out of 10. We're the ninth province out of 10 provinces, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely appalling.

And there are reasons why the health care professionals are leaving this province. There are workplace issues. There's morale issues. There's overtime issues. There are a number of issues that cause nurses to leave.

[21:00]

Now the minister, the former minister of Health is shaking his head, doesn't think it's right. But honestly people leave the province for reasons. And it's about time they start doing exit surveys and finding out why we're losing so many health care professionals, Mr. Speaker.

There are many other issues that I'd love to talk about, but I don't really have a whole lot more time I guess. I'm getting a lot of nods.

**An Hon. Member:** — Hooks.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, the hook is coming out. But anyway what I would like to say is that the provincial government had a opportunity. They took a small window and introduced some of the things that needed to be introduced. But they're falling far short on many other areas, in many other areas.

So I'll be very glad to support the amendment. And I won't be supporting the motion put forward by government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney, the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety.

**Hon. Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm extremely pleased this evening to enter into the debate on the budget speech, Ms. Deputy Speaker.

This budget was a budget that moves the province forward, building a better future for all the provincial residents right here in Saskatchewan. This budget works together with the people of Saskatchewan to make Saskatchewan the best place to work, to live, and to raise a family.

Now the members opposite, they just don't seem to get it, Madam Deputy Speaker. They continue to complain that this budget does nothing for people, does nothing for families —

just doesn't get it in their minds.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the best budget that this province has had the opportunity to see in more than 30 years.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Yates:** — This budget is about building a future for young people in this province. It's about creating job opportunities for young people. It's about creating training opportunities for young people. It's about keeping our children here in this province, raising their families, having their children.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget takes a bold step towards a new century for this province and a new direction for our future. It only could be done through the hard work of the people of this province who worked with the government to turn around what could only be seen as the worst and most dismal situation this province has ever faced.

In 1991, Madam Deputy Speaker, this province was on the verge of bankruptcy. It was at a point where it couldn't borrow any more money, where it had to look at drastic program cuts in order to balance the budgets, to move the province forward. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, this was the first province in Canada that balanced its books. Although faced with a great deal of difficulty in the early 1990s, this province balanced its books first of any province in Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Yates:** — That's what leadership is about. It's about making the tough decisions. It's not about promising everybody everything like the members opposite are doing, Madam Deputy Speaker. They are trying to be everything to everybody. And that's not about leadership. It's not about being government. It's about being irresponsible.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget is building upon a foundation that took many years to put in place. You don't get or achieve eight years of economic growth by making mistakes. You achieve eight years of economic growth and prosperity through planning, through hard work, and through achievement. But the members opposite, all they can do is throw stones, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget introduced business tax cuts designed to stim economic activity, new capital investment, create jobs and wealth for the future so that that wealth can be used once again to be reinvested in the people of this province. And what's the opposition say about this, Madam Deputy Speaker? No, it's not good enough. It's not what they want to . . . nothing good enough for them. It's not what they want to see happen.

But what surprises me, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that when the Finance critic was speaking to reporters about the budget and the PST reduction on April 5, 2004, he said this, and I quote:

They have the money to do it now. Saskatchewan families, every time they go to the grocery store, are paying an

inflated tax that nobody voted for.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Finance critic of the opposition doesn't understand we don't pay PST on groceries.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Finance critic from the opposition doesn't understand we don't pay PST on groceries. Now how can that member and how can that opposition be credible when they don't even understand what they pay taxes on today? How can they speak about taxes when they don't even know what they pay on today?

Madam Deputy Speaker, many of the members opposite were very closely linked to the government of 1980s that put this province in a crippling debt. Now they like to deny that past. They like to hide from what they did in their past. I'd just like go through a few of . . . where some of the members opposite were during the 1980s and what they did.

The Leader of the Opposition for nearly seven years served as a ministerial assistant for various cabinet ministers. And in 1991 he was the senior ministerial assistant for the minister of Economic Diversification and Trade, John Gerich. The member from Saskatoon Silver Springs was assistant to Sid Duchak, Grant Devine, and Ray Meiklejohn during the same period of time, all ministers in the Devine cabinet.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Finance critic and the Leader of the Opposition were both very clearly tied to the leadership of the Devine government. And they don't want to talk about it. They don't want to talk about it at all. And they try to say well that's when they were young or that they didn't understand what was going on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want read from an article out of the *Swift Current Sun*, March 25, 1991, and I quote:

Mr. Wall, 25, is Chief of Staff to Associate Economic Diversification and Trade Minister John Gerich.

So he's 25 years of age. This is his own article. Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to point out, that on June 17, 1991, in a memo from Ted Yarnton, executive vice president, operations, Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming, there's an order. And I quote:

Please have delivered to our Minister, Honourable John Gerich at Room 348, Legislative Building the following (attention Mr. Brad Wall):

- 1 Lemon Hart Dark Rum 1140 ml
- 2 Alberta Vodka 1140 ml
- 2 Scotch (Ballantines, J. Walker Red) 1140 ml
- 1 Beefeater Gin 750 ml
- 2 Rye (Windsor and Star) 1140 ml
- 3 24 Beer (Cans) - 1 Light, 1 Regular, 1 3.2 per cent alcohol

Attention: Mr. Brad Wall.

I have other memos dated December 18, 1990, when Mr. Wall was chief of staff in Mr. Gerich's office. On April 8, 1991, again orders for alcohol.

Now I'd like to quote from an article from *StarPhoenix* January 17, 1992. And I quote, Madam Deputy Speaker:

It is unfortunate [for] Saskatchewan's public accounts committee doesn't have the power to throw people in jail.

That's where the bureaucrats and politicians responsible for the latest trilogy of horror stories to be uncovered by the committee belong.

The former premier's office had 24 employees, most of whom were political operatives, paid by other government departments and Crown corporations. That's not secondment of personnel; it's fraud.

The Saskatchewan Property Management Corp. paid \$133,000, not for its own advertising, but to cover the government's overall advertising bill. That's not creative accounting; it's fraud.

The Saskatchewan Liquor Board gave \$15,000 worth of booze to the board's ministers. That's not a gift; it's fraud.

Is it too much to ask that government employees be paid by the department in which they work? Or that government agencies not pay for advertising services they don't receive. Or that cabinet ministers not be given rivers of free liquor when the rest of us are asked to pay?

These cases are despicable, not just for their scale but for their intent. They were concocted at great effort to deceive the people of Saskatchewan.

That makes them fraud and that's why the perpetrators, as well as those who watched and did nothing, deserve to be behind bars.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just read from an article, but it's very clear from what I've described over the last few minutes that Brad Wall, the current Leader of the Opposition, not only knew but participated in these activities. And, Ms. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan need to know this because those years were the worst, were the worst in the government's history. They were absolutely the worst in our history, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So we don't want to go back to those years. We want to talk about a positive budget moving forward. But the opposition say they can't support this budget. But yet members of the opposition supported that type of activity during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget's about people, and it's for the people, and it's for making significant progress for the province. This is the 13th consecutive balanced budget — 13th consecutive balanced budget. This is the third year that the budget is balanced without fiscal stabilization transfers — third consecutive year that it's balanced without any transfers from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Madam Deputy Speaker, government debt declined from 7.25 billion at the end of 2005-06 to 7.2 billion at the end of 2006-07. Government debt-to-GDP ratio declined from 16.7 at the end of 2005-06 to 15.8 at the end of 2006-07, under 17 per cent for the first time

since 1986-87.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a budget that made significant progress for the people of Saskatchewan, but it also is a budget that made significant investments in the people of this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's cutting business taxes to stimulate the economy and create jobs. It's providing 97.3 million in revenue sharing to municipalities. It's reducing education and property tax on agriculture land by almost \$67 million. It's providing 98.8 million in base funding for CAIS. It's funding \$100 million for crop insurance. It's providing \$3.2 billion for health. It's increasing funding for police and crime prevention, providing over \$340 million in highway improvements. It's cutting business taxes. It's eliminating the general corporate capital tax by July 1, 2008. It's eliminating the general corporate capital tax on new investments in Saskatchewan as of July 1 this year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's about stimulating our economy now. It's reducing the corporate capital tax resource surcharge rates beginning July 1 of this year. It's reducing the corporate income tax rate from 17 to 12 per cent by July 1, 2008. It's increasing the small-business threshold from 300,000 to 500,000 by July 1, 2008.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a budget about building for our future. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, on top of significant tax cuts, it's also doing a significant amount for young people and families in this province. It's freezing tuition at the universities until 2008. It's funding 32,000 university seats and 34,000 training spaces including new seats at SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies].

It's encouraging economic growth and opportunity through business tax cuts to stimulate the economy and create jobs. It's creating a new tax credit for employed tradespeople. It's providing almost \$100 million in student assistance. And it's increasing the graduate tax credit to \$850 and further increasing it to 1,000 January 1, 2007, encouraging students to establish their careers here in Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget is ensuring that no one is left behind on the path to opportunity. Expanding access to higher quality rental housing for people, it's increasing assistance rates through the Saskatchewan assistance program through the TEA [transitional employment allowance] program, through the training employment assistance program for a majority of clients by \$480 a year, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It's adding 500 new child care spaces. It's supporting 670 new families through KidsFirst. It's increasing child care subsidies by \$3.6 million. It's providing 18.2 million for Project Hope, for treatment, detox beds, and secure care, outreach services, and drug programs for young people. It's funding the largest Health budget in history at \$3.2 billion. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a budget that's about families and about people in this province.

[21:15]

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget builds on that strong foundation that the people of this province helped put in place

over the last decade. Now we have the opportunity to turn that corner and move forward and this government is doing so. It has a plan. It has a vision for the future. It has a vision to move forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you can always say you can do more. But the members opposite don't say what they would do without in order to do more. They don't have to make choices. They don't have to make decisions. They don't have to take leadership, and they don't have to govern. They simply criticize.

This is a budget that I would have expected many of the members opposite to support. This is a budget that's good for the people of Saskatchewan. It's about building a future. It's about investing for the young people in our province. It's what they have been saying they've wanted.

Well you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's what we wanted too. But before you can do that, you have to have the fiscal capability. You have to have the resources to do that, and first you need to build the foundation to move forward. And that's what the last number of years has been about, and this is about using that foundation and that base to move forward for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And I think that the members opposite, to have any credibility at all, would have to vote in favour of this budget because this budget does more for this province than has been achieved in many, many years. It cuts business tax to create that environment for building a sustained economy. It creates training spaces. It creates jobs for young people, Mr. Speaker.

They don't want to vote for it. And then they put forward an amendment of non-confidence that just doesn't make any sense at all, Madam Speaker. They say it disagrees with the general budgetary policy of the government because the Premier and cabinet have not fully implemented a growth agenda.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what is this budget about if it's not about a growth agenda? It cuts taxes to create opportunity and economic growth. It creates training spaces to train our young people. It's about the people of this province. It's about creating growth. Now, Mr. Speaker, they don't say anything. They don't present any viable alternatives. They don't talk about anything positive. They simply complain.

Mr. Speaker, responsibility is something that these members on this side take very seriously. They want to build on the future. They want to move forward. The members opposite simply want to criticize. They see it as their role to oppose everything. Well responsible oppositions don't oppose everything. They're responsible, and they vote in favour of budgets that they believe in.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Yates:** — And this is a budget that the people of Saskatchewan believe in. The only people who don't believe in this budget, Mr. Speaker, are the people opposite. The people of this province from the chamber of commerces to social activist groups across this province have all said this is a good budget. It's a balanced budget that provides for economic growth and

money for those who need it most in our society.

It's a good budget, Mr. Speaker, and for those reasons I'm going to be supporting the budget and opposing, and opposing, Mr. Speaker, the amendment. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. It's a pleasure for me to speak tonight on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills with regard to the budget debate. We have covered a lot of ground tonight, some of it pretty shaky, some of it pretty sound, but we've covered a lot of ground nevertheless, Mr. Speaker.

And since this is the first time that I've been able to speak on behalf of my constituents in any significant way, I want to recognize the wonderful support I get from the people of Cypress Hills. They've been particularly generous with me personally over the last year. They've expressed concern about whatever health issues I might have had, and I want to thank them publicly and on the record tonight for that concern and that support. It's been gratifying to have that, and if anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's encouraged me to do a better job on their behalf because there are people in the constituency who are counting on me to speak on their behalf in this august place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was actually preparing to be pretty generous in my remarks tonight as regards this budget. But you know I've been dissuaded somewhat by some of the comments I've heard from several of the speakers, most recently from the government side. You know the Minister of Justice took us down this tattered trail of revisionist history, and I just can't be generous to that kind of nonsense, frankly. It's just beyond the pale that he would go that far back in history to try and make a point.

Now you know if he wants to believe that stuff, that's fine, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the point of the matter is that we've had a whole generation of young people grow up in the intervening years from which he was drawing his material. They don't even know who Grant Devine was. And the fact of the matter is that the biggest majority of people in this province really don't care who he was.

The people of this province want to know that this province is being governed in the best interests of our future. And they're not real sure that that's happening under the leadership of this NDP administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last Friday the Regina *Leader Post* headlined its story, following the Saskatchewan budget: "Thanks Oil Patch." The headline writer for this particular story had it right because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it hadn't been for the oil patch, if it hadn't been for the resource revenues generated by potash and uranium and other mining institutions here in the province, if it hadn't been for the overwhelming financial generation created by those industries, this budget wouldn't have been possible.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's one thing to be a good manager,

but it's another to take credit for something that you have absolutely no control over.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that we have \$60-a-barrel oil. In fact I believe the government has made its projections based on an average price of about \$58 a barrel, but it's been as high as 65, pressing 70. And that has nothing to do with this government. This government had no say in the value of the barrel of oil. It had no mechanism, no means by which to make that price part of the reality we're dealing with. This government has been the benefactor of good fortune.

Good management is one thing but recognizing good fortune is also important. And being able to make good use of good fortune is absolutely critical.

It's very ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government of the day would be the benefactors of an oil price that was impacted almost exclusively by a war in a far-off Middle Eastern country, a war that this government did not support, in fact spoke publicly against it.

And now we have the benefits being reaped by this government, and that is an irony beyond which most people can't get. They're looking at this and saying, it's simply unbelievable that the government of the day would take credit for their successes in this area when they had no part in the way it came about — and didn't even support the act of history that brought high oil prices to the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the last member, the member from Dewdney, talk about how this is a people's budget and the people of Saskatchewan support it. Now I will grant you a couple of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will grant you that there is a lot of money spread over a lot of different areas to the benefit of quite a large number of different groups. The money was spent more or less an inch deep and spread over such a wide area that it was really hit-and-miss in many respects. It benefited some groups very well, and it disenfranchised others significantly.

And when I say that, I'm thinking mostly in terms of my own constituents. While this particular budget has brought benefit to some individuals, I represent the people of Cypress Hills. And if I ask them in conversation, had they heard about this budget, well you know, frankly they know very little about it. They heard, you know, a brief summary of it, maybe on the newscast or read a bit in the paper or saw it on TV. But when it comes right down to knowing what this budget was about and how it might affect them personally, they're vastly unaware of the consequences — with one or two exceptions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And those exceptions are where the rubber meets the road for those people in southwest Saskatchewan.

Now there's two areas of particular concern as it relates to this budget that I want to talk about right now. Of course the first one is the area of agriculture. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Cypress Hills is largely an agricultural-based constituency. We have a number of other industries, but agriculture is still the pre-eminent economic driver in southwest Saskatchewan. And to have agriculture as clearly avoided, simply ignored in this particular budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is unconscionable.

Now I know the Minister of Agriculture would say, well we're going to fund CAIS and, you know, we're putting money into crop insurance, and we're doing this and that and the other thing. Well as my colleague from Cannington pointed out in his lengthy list of statistics tonight, the money going into agriculture this year is less than it was last year. And it's significantly less than it's been in years previous. So to talk about agriculture as being supported by this government in any significant way is just simply wrong.

Now when you talk about the funding going into CAIS, Mr. Deputy Speaker, CAIS is a flawed program. It is widely regarded as the most failed and incomplete farm support program ever devised for western Canadian farmers and what we've seen in my constituency . . .

And some of this information, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is anecdotal; I'll agree. But I've got it from a pretty reliable source. I met with all of the credit union managers in the constituency of Cypress Hills recently, and I asked them if they could tell me how many farmers who are their customers might qualify for CAIS payments. The most optimistic number was 25 per cent. Estimates ranged as low as 5 per cent.

Now the credit union in my constituency is the pre-eminent financial institution. They do more farm and ranch banking than any other institution. I meet with those individuals on an annual basis to find out what they perceive to be the issues relating to agriculture and how it's affecting the economy and how it's affecting their own business and viability. And for them to tell me that CAIS is that poorly designed that it would have virtually no impact in the vast majority of farmers in dire financial situations says to me that it is a program that is not just flawed but is doomed to failure. Unfortunately many farmers and ranchers in my constituency may be equally doomed to failure because of the situation that CAIS has brought about.

And at this point, not only is the program flawed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but so too is the reasoning and the rationale for continuing to support it. Now the current government has said that they will support it to the tune of \$100 million now, with the balance coming later. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the money is needed today.

There are literally dozens and dozens and dozens of ranchers and farmers who will probably not be able to go to the fields adequately prepared financially or with the proper seeds or chemicals and so forth because of their financial situation. So we needed the provincial government to acknowledge the severity of the farm financial crisis in this budget, and it didn't happen. And I think that that is a travesty that will not be easily forgotten or forgiven, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And here we have crop insurance programs, you know, underfunded again — \$12 million taken out of the crop insurance program. This government has been responsible for the diminished impact and effectiveness of crop insurance year after year after year. Higher premiums, less coverage — it's a constant feature of the provincial budget. And for the government to take pride in the fact that we have a crop insurance program that is working effectively is just simply whistling in the dark.

[21:30]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the crop insurance program, if it is to be financially self-sustaining or viable in the long run, needs more participants not fewer. And if you recall there was a large debate in this House a week or 10 days ago about how the government was sending out notices to individuals about paying up or being shut out of the program. You know, those producers aren't avoiding paying because they're mean people or evil people or not good business people. You'd be surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many bins are full of grain in my constituency and none of it is moving — no grain movement, no money. It appears that if these premiums aren't paid . . . no money, no heart.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just, I can't believe that a government would just brush aside the troubles facing agriculture as cavalierly and as casually as this government has done in this particular budget. The worst farm financial crisis in 80 years, in 80 years — it's not just a bad time. It's not just a difficult time. It is the worst year by every standard in 80 years. And this government didn't come to bat for the rural producers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about highway spending. If agriculture is one of the major issues in my constituency, the state of our highways is the other. There is an appalling lack of regard for the safety and the economic viability on the part of this government for the people of southwest Saskatchewan given the way they overlook the condition of our highways.

I noticed that highway spending is up in this year's budget by \$45 million approximately. But I'm told that actual money spent in southwest Saskatchewan will be less this year than previous years. And given the condition of our highways, the potential for serious accidents, the economic impact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's just unacceptable that the government would rule out significant highway construction projects in southwest Saskatchewan right now.

And I'll tell you why it's particularly galling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have with me here three pages of information that various RMs [rural municipality] have been able to garner from Industry and Resources. They've looked very carefully at the amount of drilling, the amount of production for both oil and gas in the RMs of southwest Saskatchewan. There's 26 RMs on this sheet where all of the natural gas Crown royalty and freehold production tax data are detailed. And on this page, they've got crude oil Crown royalty and freehold production tax data for 13 other RMs.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this was an interactive game, I would ask you to guess how much money the current government takes out of southwest Saskatchewan in oil and gas royalties and other revenues. In one year, 2005, we have compiled the data amounting to \$260,928,392.80 — 200 and almost \$61 million in royalty and other revenues this year, 2005.

And do you know what it would take to build the highways in southwest Saskatchewan? The estimate is somewhere in the range of 45 to \$50 million. You know, that would be 20 per cent of one year's revenue.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason this is so galling is that that money comes out of the southwest in huge sums. Virtually none of it is going to go back into highways this year. The pavement is crumbling and yet . . . You know, there isn't a wise business person operating anywhere in this province who wouldn't understand the necessity of reinvesting; it would be wise to reinvest in the elements that are making you money. Any farmer, any businessman, any other business that does not invest in the very elements that help them make money is doomed to failure. And this government has chosen to ignore that basic principle of wise business decision making.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the data here and given what they're going to invest in southwest Saskatchewan in the next year, it's almost criminal. Now you know it's gotten so bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's gotten so bad that the ambulances going to the hospital in Swift Current — and hopefully the new hospital in Swift Current sometime — they can't even go directly any more. The ambulances are going south from Leader to Maple Creek and then all the way down the No. 1 to get to Swift Current. That endangers the health of people.

There are individuals in the Lancer and Sceptre and Prelate and Leader areas who'd rather do their business in Swift Current, but they automatically go to Medicine Hat; not because it's closer, not because it's cheaper, but because it's safer.

Now the Highways department says safety is their first priority. You would never know that in southwest Saskatchewan. You would never know that. Safety is an abrogation of this government's responsibility in southwest Saskatchewan. And when somebody dies, when somebody's killed, when there is a serious accident, who's going to take responsibility for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the fact that wealth of \$261 million is coming out of southwest Saskatchewan on an annual basis?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had a number of other areas I wanted to touch on as it relates to this budget. I want to talk about debt a little bit. You know we heard this diatribe from a couple of members over there about the Devine debt. Well you know I'd just like to ask them if they could tell me the difference between good debt and bad debt because I keep hearing this from NDP people all the time. I heard it from the former NDP candidate in my constituency. It appears, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the definition of good or bad debt depends on who incurred it. If the NDP incurred it, it's good debt. If somebody else incurs it, it's bad debt.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Elhard:** — You know the only people who think that's funny — and the only people who respond that way — are the NDP. The people of the province don't see that; they don't see that as humorous. They don't think it's funny at all. Debt is debt. And whether it was incurred by Allan Blakeney to the tune of \$7 billion, or Grant Devine, another \$7 billion, or this government to the tune of \$288 million in this year's budget, it's debt. It's debt. D-e-b-t. People don't distinguish. The general public don't distinguish.

So it might be political fun to stand in here and make these points. But in reality, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan don't think it's funny. They want leadership. They want good,

solid planning. They want foresight. They want vision. And they don't see it happening here.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about the loss of population. The government has put up a plan to recruit 5,000 new immigrants to the province. I'm going to believe it when I see it. Excuse me for being a doubting Thomas. We couldn't get 400 here last year, or just barely got 400. How are we going to get 5,000 next year?

The most difficult problem I've got with this whole thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that while we're out recruiting 5,000 new immigrants to come to Saskatchewan, we're chasing young people out of my constituency on a daily basis that would account for probably a third of the number of people who have left in the last year. The population loss in the constituency of Cypress Hills is huge. By the time the next boundary redrawing happens, my constituency will be substantially larger again. I would bet that we have lost 10 per cent of the population in the Cypress Hills constituency over the last four or five years.

I mean it's incredible. I know people on a daily basis leaving this province — young people leaving school, high school, not even considering Saskatchewan universities and colleges — going to Alberta. We chase them out faster than we can bring them in. I would suggest to this government that they pay much more attention to the young people who are born, raised, educated, right here in this province, and do what is absolutely necessary to keep them here as opposed to looking at alternative methods of growing our population. Immigration is a good idea. I've got no problem with it. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has to be weighed against the best programs and plans that would keep our own young people in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have 30 seconds, and I can't cover all the stuff I brought with me tonight. I brought pages and pages of things.

One of the questions I'd like to ask is . . . In Murray Mandryk's column a couple days ago, when he talked about Marie Broberg, the constituent of mine from Gull Lake who went to Calgary because she couldn't get into SIAST, one of the questions I'd like to ask this government is, are they sure that the things they put together in this budget will bring Marie Broberg back, or will it prevent the next Marie Broberg from leaving the province?

If they can say that with assurance and confidence, and if they can show me the evidence of that at the end of next year, I would be happy to give them the credit for that. But in the meantime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm afraid that I will not be supporting the budget. I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Athabasca.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!



**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to rise in full support of this budget and to basically point out three different parts of the presentation I want to make this evening.

First of all I want to say a kind thank you to all the constituents of Athabasca. That represents one-quarter of the land mass of Saskatchewan and some very fine people spread out throughout that one-quarter of the land mass, all the way from the tiny northern community of Camsell Portage, Uranium City, of course, and the communities of Patuanak, Green Lake, Buffalo Narrows, La Loche, and many of the other communities that represent the Athabasca.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, when I first became involved with provincial politics and watching what provincial politics is, and I sit here today after 11 years listening to the Sask Party opposition trying to become the mushy middle, and I'm sitting here and I'm just shaking my head every day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Every day, because when we began this research of the provincial governments and seeing where things were in terms of what this government was doing, at the time when this government took over in 1991, this province was 15-plus billion dollars in debt, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 15-plus billion, 15-plus billion dollars in debt.

Now, now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're under 11 billion thanks to this government handling of the Saskatchewan people's money.

Mr. Speaker, at the height of the interest payments, we were paying something like \$860 million each and every year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Each and every year we paid \$860 million of that Tory debt. Today now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're roughly paying \$550 million in interest. That interest is coming down.

And one of the most amazing stats that I want to point out, at one time interest payments was almost double our Education budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The interest on the debt accumulated by that party opposite was almost double our whole entire Education budget for Saskatchewan.

And today, now under the new Minister of Finance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say to you today that our Education budget is almost triple the interest payments that we pay every year — almost triple. And who done that? It wasn't the Sask Party . . . [inaudible] . . . them that put us in the trouble to begin with. It was the careful handling of the finances of the people of Saskatchewan under this NDP government that we were able to achieve that together, Mr. Speaker. One of the . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — One of the most important . . . So when I hear the members opposite whine and complain every day, bring up little cases here and there in terms of talking about what they think is important, to the people of Saskatchewan, I tell them: . . . [inaudible] . . . when they complain and whine, who created this mess to begin with? Right over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Right over there, that was where the problem began, and that's not where the problem's going to end, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park, the

former minister of Finance and the media who dubbed, and I quote, "Dirty Harry." Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be pointed out when the member from Regina Douglas Park was the minister of Finance, he told the entire people of Saskatchewan that Saskatchewan must make sure that we live within our means, that we make some strategic moves right now to curb our spending, watch how we manage things, pay down debt, be careful in how we manage our finances.

And that was two or three years ago when that message was delivered by the then minister of Finance, the member from Regina Douglas Park. And when he started talking about some of the things, this entire caucus listened to that advice and today that advice is paying dividends because we're able to do more, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I want to recognize the former minister of Finance for some of his work and some of his vision and some of the fight that he had to undertake to make sure that the spending was under control and that the good times would roll out if we had that fiscal integrity and we had the courage to hold back spending then. And today it's paying off, Mr. Deputy Speaker; it's paying off.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[21:45]

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — I also want to recognize the former minister from Massey Place when he led some of the charges in terms of trying to bring back income tax reform, personal income tax reform, and looking at a wide variety of measures to make sure the people of Saskatchewan were not unduly taxed. We have to recognize that early work. The former minister of Finance, and I could use his name now because he's no longer with us, is the Hon. Jim Melenchuk, who also had some very solid work being undertaken in Finance.

So every time, every time we look at the ministers of finances across the history of this government, they have done solid work, solid work. And as each of the ministers of Finance has done what they had to do to bring this fiscal plan in place, they handed off the baton to even greater members, and today now we can see the balance of that work and the benefit of that work is finally coming to fruition under this NDP government. That Sask Party opposition created the problems; we are solving them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — But the new Minister of Finance when he spoke on Thursday last, there's three points that he raised that I was just absolutely pleased with, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this shows the content and the direction that this government's going.

The first thing that he said is the plan and the vision that he has of making sure that Saskatchewan is deemed a permanent have province, so we never have to count on Ottawa again. To me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that speaks volumes of this government's commitment and the people of Saskatchewan's commitment to make sure that we never have to balance our books or look at outside means in which we can meet our needs, that we are an

independent and proud province that strives to become a have province forever.

And there's only three provinces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have that status, and that is Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. And it makes me proud to hear our Minister of Finance say we want to keep that a permanent status and it is our endeavour to do so. And this government's past success and other ministers' past success in Finance have allowed us to do that and we will continue that work.

The second thing that he pointed out in that speech was the fact that what was really important, really important, the pavement doesn't stop at the reserve line. That was the other important argument that the Minister of Finance got up and said on Thursday last. And I think that's so very important. It speaks volumes of our commitment to the First Nations and the Métis communities.

And on budget day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did we hear anything on the Aboriginal front? Like their federal cousins at the national level, when it came to the Kelowna accord, nothing. Nothing. Silent. The silence was deafening.

Now when we talked about the Aboriginal commitment in this budget, whether it's SIIT or help through the SAP [Saskatchewan Assistance Plan] and TEA increases or whether they're talking about pavement not ending on the reserve line, what did the folks across the way have to say about that? Nothing. There was zero effort, zero recognition on their part. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that speaks volumes of their so-called commitment to the Aboriginal people.

The third comment that really interests me in the speech of the Minister of Finance was the fact that he spoke of the \$1 billion in construction commitments that this government has made. And across the way, we admit we had a good year. We talked about \$960 million that we had a surplus. And they keep telling everybody, everybody that listened to them, oh these guys are sitting on a mountain of cash. A mountain of cash, they say. And they say, oh we can help you, but this government's stopping us.

Well they talk about \$1 billion surplus, and we're committing \$1 billion in construction alone. We're not stopping there. We're doing more, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So when people ask me, do you guys have \$1 billion, I say, well yes we have about \$960 million in surplus. And we're using every bit of that money to help pay down debt, for capital construction, to help the farmers and continue building this great province. And we can show time and time again where that money is spent.

But on the other side, it depends on who's in the galleries. It depends what the media covers that day. They try to be everything to everybody. And they cost this province billions in the old days, and they're trying to do it again, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — So I sit here. I listen to their whining and their complaining. And I hear them talk about tired old government, they say. Well you know I've been around these

benches now for seven or eight years, and I can tell you there's nobody on this side that is fatigued at all because they're seeing great progress made on the social front, on the economic front.

And we're going to go for that fifth term, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're going to win. You know why we're going to win? Not because of the work we've done and the progress we've made . . . is that we look across the way, and there's the tired, old group there. There's old Tories tired of waiting for power, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when you sit up and think about this, when you sit up and think about this, you do a difference of age. On average, our caucus is much younger than that old Tory opposition.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — People have to turn around and look on that side and say, how old are those guys over there? And how tired are they over there? I can tell you, they're pretty tired. Those old Tories are tired.

And one of the things, one of the things that I really laugh at when I sit here on budget day, and I hear our Minister of Finance get up and say with pride, because he had all that support in the past, that they're going to implement some of the work on Vicq, and they're going to help the industry, and they're going to help the corporations make Saskatchewan a profitable place to invest. And they get up and they say oh, it was our idea. You guys are listening to us, and absolutely everybody on this side laughed their heads off.

You know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Those guys haven't had an idea in 14 years, in 14 years. And every bit of advice they had, we tell them take your advice, especially if it's financial, take it and stick it because we're not going to use it. We took your advice once before, and it don't work. So you haven't had an idea in 14 years, and we're not about to let you have any ideas for the next 10, 12 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would point out, if this was a hockey game, one of the members likened this game to a hockey game. And I would say the last 14 years, NDP 14, Saskatchewan Party zero. I think this is a lopsided hockey game, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there should be a mercy rule in politics. Because there's a mercy rule in hockey, there should be a mercy rule in politics, and these guys should give up and go home because Saskatchewan ain't listening to you. You have no credibility. You never had, and you never will.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, when you talk about that party, that party, and I'll tell you how they're a mile deep and an inch thick. They try to be everything to everybody, but they got nothing underneath. All you have to do according to their strategists across the way is . . . You know how you get a cake and it says just add water, and you have an instant cake. Well what they think is you can become an instant socialist. You can become an instant Crown defender. You can become an instant public health care defender. As far as they're concerned, all you have to do is add an election.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan say you

can't become an instant defender of public health care because an election is on. People see right through those guys. Right through them. In the North, they say who are those guys trying to fool? Those are old Tories tired of hiding from their past. That's what northern Saskatchewan says, and I support what they say 100 per cent.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, we, the people, are tired of paying down their debt. We, the people, are tired of defending health care against a party that has a two tiered stealth plan to bring in private health care. We know on this side, that that's their plan. We know they create as much confusion and problems with the public health care system in Saskatchewan because all of a sudden public confidence will erode and the private agenda will come up, right up to bat. And guess who's out there shaking hands with the private sector saying right on you guys, come help us out? That will be that party across the way.

So today the Minister of Health defends health care. The Minister of Finance puts 300 million more dollars towards health care, and these guys say, oh it's not enough; it's not enough. Their direct objective is to create fear and divisions and doom and gloom when it comes to the health care system and the Crowns because they can bring in their private health care, and they can bring in their private plans to take away our Crowns — whether it's SaskTel, SaskPower, or SaskEnergy. And on this side of the House and the vast majority of people of Saskatchewan are saying, the jig is up. We know what you guys are doing. We know exactly what your plan is, and we ain't buying it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we, the people, are also tired of watching those crocodile tears from across the way when it comes to representing the poor people. We, the people, are tired of your constant whining and complaining and really, quite frankly, sick and tired of you all over there trying to hide who you are. Just come out and admit who you are. To heck with trying to compete with the NDP on the mushy middle side of what you guys are trying to do because it ain't working. It ain't working. It ain't working at all.

Now the government, the NDP government are going over to the Sask Party's so-called territory. We're saying, hold it you guys; we're not going to give you that territory for nothing. We're going to talk to the corporations and the business people to try and bring them on side to build that brave, bold new Saskatchewan.

And what I think happened on budget day with our Minister of Finance, those guys got knocked silly because they got a good solid right hook, followed up with a left undercut. And you know what happened? They're dazed. They're bruised. They're battered. And above all else, people are starting to realize who they are, and that's going to catch up to them, and that's going to make them pay come next election, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to point out, I want to point out, I go back to the Kelowna accord. What did we get from those guys? What do you get from those guys over there when the federal Tories talk about the Aboriginal people? Zero. When the Saskatchewan

Party talks about Aboriginal people and this budget speech — a big fat zero. When they talk about funding for farmers — a big fat zero.

You know right today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Minister of Agriculture is off to Ottawa to fight for the provincial farmers. And where's their guys? They're sitting over there or they're sitting having tea somewhere. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? The minister that's heading out to Ottawa to fight for Saskatchewan farmers is out there alone, is out there alone — very few people out there supporting. And the official opposition, what's their plan? No, we'll let them go. We'll let them go by themselves. We're not going to go and help them. And it's surprising. When the federal Liberals were in power, they were there. They were there. Now when their cousins . . . well no, no, they say it's not their cousins. But when their cousins are there, oh no, we can't go give our cousins heck.

But you know what's going to happen? I predict, as many people in my caucus will predict, they will go sometime in May, maybe June. And they'll have this meeting with the Prime Minister, and they'll come home. Yes, we have victory; we have money for the farmers. And you know what really disturbing about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? That's their strategy to try and appear to win for the farmers. But all it is, is cheap politics. That's all it is.

If you're going to come along and say you're going to defend the farmer, you don't do it on your political terms. You do it together with all Saskatchewan people. But no, for convenience and to try and qualify who they are, and who they not are, that's what confuses me. You know, they said, no we're not Tories, but we're federal Tories. But we're not going to work with you guys because it doesn't fit our political agenda. And in the mix and all that, where are the farmers? Where are the farmers? The farmers need help now.

Every day we hear the critics say, we need help now. But where are these guys? They're sitting on their hands and knees right here waiting for us to do something, and our guys out there in Ottawa fighting. And they're sitting out here, going to go there maybe a month from now, two months from now and come back and declare victory. Why? Because they want to make sure they get the credit and they're prepared to wait two or three months for a simple game of politics. And I say, shame on you and shame on all of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Agriculture is out there fighting for Saskatchewan farmers alone, imagine who's fighting for us on Saskatchewan equalization. It's not them; it's us. Who's fighting for daycare plans? It's not them; it's us. We are fighting for Saskatchewan every day, every inch. It is not them. The only time that they're part of the equation of fighting Ottawa is when it's convenient for them or if it's politically expedient for them. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say shame on them because you're not here as federal apologists. You are here to represent Saskatchewan people and all Saskatchewan people and not do it to your political time frame.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — And, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important, I'll point out, is that these guys across the way, they

haven't spoke of the budget in question period. They haven't spoken about that. We don't want to talk about the good things in Saskatchewan.

And I kind have done a survey. And they talk about population loss, and I think my colleague, the Minister of Industry and Resources, is on the right track when he says that when they say, oh you're losing people . . . We done a survey and I found out, I found out in a survey that every time the Leader of the Opposition gets up to speak and calls down Saskatchewan, another 50 people leave. I was sitting here on budget day and I listened to the Finance critic and the Leader of the Opposition speak; well I wanted to leave too. I said, jeez, you guys are so bloody depressing. Like where is . . . is there a sun in your world? You know, is there birds and trees and happiness and growth and opportunity in your world? Because every time there's something happy on this side and something fun happening, those guys across the way say, oh yes, whine, whine, whine.

[22:00]

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out . . . I haven't even gotten to our vision yet. I haven't even gotten to our vision yet. And there'll be others that'll speak about the vision, the vision that this Saskatchewan government has. When they get up and they say, that NDP government, they say it with pride across the way. We sat on this side and say, that old Tory opposition across the way hasn't had a good idea in 14 years. They created the problem to begin with, and every complaint that they have is only meant for their political purposes. And I say shame on you. And I expect every one of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to stand up in full support of this budget — which I know they won't. I know they won't. I know they won't.

And right now there's people fighting in Ottawa for all of our needs. And where are they? They're sitting in their chairs here. They should be right out there helping out, right up there, right next to our Premier, putting all politics aside and saying, this is important for Saskatchewan. Let's put our political differences aside. But they won't.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll say this. I'll say this, is the people of Saskatchewan will not be fooled. We will not be undeterred by some of their wrangling of who they are. And I say this as well: bring on the next election because we're ready to rock you. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Chisholm:** — I am pleased to be able to participate in the debate on this budget. I am pleased to offer my observations on this budget from my perspective and that of the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford. I don't expect to be as entertaining as some of the speakers have been tonight, but I do wish to offer my sincere perspective on the numbers in this budget.

We've been presented with a budget that anticipates a reduction in revenue for 2006-2007 from 8 billion to 7.7 billion, and yet an increase in spending.

The projections for 2007-2008 indicate a further reduction in revenue and a further increase in spending. This indicates to me that this government is intent on increases on spending side in spite of their inability to generate or forecast increases on the revenue side.

In order to show a balanced budget for 2006-2007, a transfer of \$75 million from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is utilized for this year, which is concerning in itself. But looking forward to '07-08, a projected transfer of \$520 million is forecast to supposedly balance that budget.

I have on previous occasions questioned the validity of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I've been made clearly aware of the Provincial Auditor's view on the existence, or lack thereof, and utilization of this Fiscal Stabilization Fund for questionable purposes. Suffice it to say that the Provincial Auditor has questioned the reality of the fund itself and its inclusion in the budget process and the presentation of the financial position of the government. Its inclusion in the presentation of this budget has the effect of restating the surplus in the general revenue of 26.9 million to a reported 101.9 million.

Further this document goes on to state that the entire 101 million will be allocated to permanent debt reduction. So I would suggest the general public would interpret this budget as a budget that reduces our province's debt. However on further inspection, we find that on a summary basis, the net debt of the province of Saskatchewan increases by \$288.5 million.

This government claims 13 consecutive balanced budgets. The Provincial Auditor does not concur with this claim. Who, Mr. Speaker, would you suggest we believe?

To me, Mr. Speaker, at this juncture in our history, we are increasing the per capita debt at an unacceptable rate. We are all too familiar with the statistics that indicate a decreasing population, a decreasing number of net tax contributing residents, a dismal record in job creation statistics. In light of these trends, increasing spending in a climate of decreasing revenues, demographic indications for the future, and dismal job creation, one must question the sustainability of this plan.

I, along with my colleagues, commend the government on the implementation of the Vicq commission relating to corporate tax changes. I would add that it was long overdue, and the government's reluctance to implement changes to put our province in a competitive economic climate will continue to limit the potential that we do have. We will continue to lag behind other provinces until such time that our labour policies and government intervention in the economy are addressed. Unfortunately these concerns are not addressed, and we will continue to be limited in attracting business that will bring investment into our province, that will create the jobs we need to increase our population, and in particular to be able to offer jobs to our young people that are about to enter the labour force.

Mr. Speaker, recent Statistics Canada figures show that over the past 12 months Saskatchewan has lost 5,200 jobs. In this same period of time, we've seen 84,000 new jobs created in British Columbia, 68,000 jobs created in Alberta, and 4,600 jobs created in Manitoba. It appears to be an admission of this

government's failure that it has reduced its job creation forecast from 4,800 projected last year to 3,200 for the coming year — a reduction in their expectations of fully one-third. This dismal job creation projection comes even though we are increasing or already have increased those working in government by some 430 full-time equivalents.

This dismal job creation projection comes in a year when the government anticipates an increase in immigration of some 800 to 1,200 persons. Mr. Speaker, although the immigration initiative is commendable, I would question that a staff of 60 people would be required to attempt to attract an additional 800 immigrants. This is the target for 2006. That would be about 13 additional placements for each government employee. Could this immigration initiative not have provided an opportunity for the public sector involvement?

It is interesting to note who is hiring in this province. In the first two months of 2006, the public sector grew by 1.4 per cent. The private sector fell by 1.2 per cent. In 2005 the public sector portion grew by 1.7 per cent. The private sector fell by point one per cent. In 2004 the public sector increased by 3.2 per cent while the private sector increased by point nine per cent. In 2003 the public sector increased by 2.7 per cent and the private sector by 1.8 per cent. In short, Mr. Speaker, this government's solution to the job creation dilemma has been to increase the size of the government in spite of a declining population during the same time period.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite accuse us of doom and gloom and suggest we have no solutions to the situation. Let me suggest, Mr. Speaker, some directions that would improve our situation — firstly, creating a competitive labour legislation environment; secondly, limiting government's intervention in the economy; thirdly, a long-term strategic plan for improving infrastructure; fourthly, an innovation agenda which would include a plan for long-term predictable funding to advanced educational institutions; fifthly, more progressive research and development tax incentives to enhance commercialization of new technologies and research; and lastly, a new level of economic co-operation with our western neighbours to reduce interprovincial trade barriers. These are the initiatives, Mr. Speaker, that are now needed at this time and in this place.

Mr. Speaker, I represent a constituency that is largely agricultural. Over this past weekend, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of constituents, and the question that kept coming up was, was there anything in this budget for agriculture and for our rural communities? Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I was not able to pass on much positive news.

Yes, the addition to the integrated health facility in Maidstone is progressing. We had the announcement just prior to the 2003 provincial election. We've had an official sod turning. And I guess that's about it to date. I anticipate some significant problems regarding this project, in that the initial budgeted amounts will fall short of the actual cost. This is a significant problem, an increasing problem in our regional health authorities. As our new facilities that are being built accommodate much larger areas, the requirements for funding by the immediate local governments and local residents has become more and more onerous.

So, Mr. Speaker, what was the story on this budget as it relates to agriculture? The reduction in the education portion of property tax as it relates to agricultural land is met with a justified degree of concern by my constituents. The question is: will the results of this government's amalgamation of school divisions result in any real savings? And if not, there is increasing scepticism that these taxes will continue to spiral upwards. The anticipated changes to the taxation base and the mill rates yet to be set have many producers concerned that they may very well be paying more and not less property tax, if not in this first year then in the ensuing years.

What did this budget contain regarding the safety nets that have been in place in the past few years for our producers?

Firstly, crop insurance has provided not only a limited level of protection but also a guarantee which could be provided to financial institutions to enable credit to be provided. This government has budgeted a decrease of \$12 million regarding this program. Coverages have been reduced for 2006-07, and the producers' share of premiums have increased. For some who are unable to pay their 2005 premiums prior to March 31, their participation in this program has been terminated. They are now faced with not only the absence of minimal protection from the program but also an inability to access much needed credit for their operations. For some it will be the last straw.

There was also no good news for the participants of the CAIS program. In the years 2004-2005, \$154 million was required from this reluctant government to honour the province's commitments to this program. In this budget all that has been set aside for 2006 is a base commitment.

Producers know and the financial institutions know that this level of support is likely to be inadequate. Once again the ability to obtain credit is seriously jeopardized because the full commitments to this program are not forthcoming and not timely.

Mr. Speaker, both of these programs are suffering from the underlying formula on which they are based. Because of declining commodity prices and reductions in production as a result of drought, frost, and excess moisture in the past three years in particular, the protection available under the crop insurance program has been declining. The CAIS program has seen the same factors reduce their margins to even greater extent in that rapidly increasing operating costs — seed, fertilizer, chemicals, and fuel — come into play to further reduce the margins and thereby the level of protection. So, Mr. Speaker, I was not able to provide much positive news to the agriculture producers of my community.

[22:15]

Mr. Speaker, this budget and the Speech from the Throne refer to no one will be left behind on the path to opportunity. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a group of people in rural Saskatchewan in particular that are being left behind. But they are being left behind in that they are being shuttled from facility to facility, in and out of their province to receive adequate care in their senior years.

One senior who spent her entire life in my constituency was not

able to maintain her own home any longer, so she was placed in not one, not two, not three, not four, not five, but in six different facilities. She is presently now in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. For the record, she is my aunt.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:19.]

Another senior, 89 years of age, in failing health, still resides in her own home. Over the past two years, she has been admitted to hospital as a result of falls. Once admitted she's been granted respite status and allowed to stay in the hospital for 30-day intervals. Then she is sent back to her home. She wants to remain in her home community, and the lodge is across the street from her home. She fell again this past week. However the health authority in its assessment continues to determine that she should remain in her own home. Her family, her friends, and her neighbours are concerned. She is concerned and prepared to seek the safety of the home where a number of her friends are cared for, a facility her family has supported and contributed to since it was built some 50 years ago. Should she have to fall again? For the record, Mr. Speaker, she is my mom.

Mr. Speaker, this budget lacks vision for the future of this province, for the young and the elderly alike, and I will not be supporting this budget, but will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand this evening in the House and to speak in favour of the government's plan to make Saskatchewan an even better place to live, work, and raise a family. Mr. Speaker, I've got many comments that I'd like to make on my constituency and on this excellent budget that was brought down by the Minister of Finance at the end of last week. But, Mr. Speaker, seeing the hour is getting late, I will adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow that the debate on this motion be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

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