

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
February 23, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Prayers

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the people from the Gull Lake area, I would like to present the following petition. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure programs towards double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in the province.

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

And I'd be happy to table them on behalf of the people of the Gull Lake area.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from people from south-west Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers, and urge the federal government to recognize that gun control and crime control are not synonymous.

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

And we have people from Fir Mountain, McCord, Glentworth, Lafleche, several in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

And of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to oppose changes to federal legislation regarding firearm ownership.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT,

Clerk: — Mr. Britton, as Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills, presents the seventh report of the said committee which is as follows:

Your committee wishes to report that Mrs. Teichrob has been elected as Chair of the committee. Your committee has duly examined the undermentioned petitions for private Bills and finds that the provisions of rules 59, 60, and 61 have been fully complied with.

Of the Caronport schools in the province of Saskatchewan praying for an Act to amend the Briercrest Bible College;

Of Our Lady of the Prairies Foundation in the province of Saskatchewan praying for an Act to amend the Act of incorporation;

Of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church praying for an Act to incorporate; and

Of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in the province of Saskatchewan praying for an Act to amend The Act to incorporate the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers Ltd.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Shellbrook-Torch River:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

Mr. Lyons: — A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

In regard to the Act changing the status of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, I have been requested to ask the Speaker for a ruling under rule 37 on a question of conflict of interest, whether or not the provisions of that Act in fact apply, a conflict of interest for members who are members of the Saskatchewan legislature, to in fact vote on that particular Act for the legislature.

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member from Regina Rosemont has made a point of order. I will look at his point of order and reserve judgement on it and bring back a statement to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Clerk: — Pursuant to rule 66, the private Bills 01, 02, 03, and 04 are hereby laid on the Table and are deemed to be read the first time.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the department of Provincial Secretary: (1) how many employee positions are there in the 90th anniversary office; (2) what are those positions, their job descriptions, and current monthly salaries; and (3) when did those positions commence and when are they scheduled to end?

My second set of questions, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Environment and Resource Management: (1) how much has been paid this fiscal year to Phoenix Advertising Group by your department; (2) what were the services that were purchased or commissioned; and (3) were all services paid for actually received?

Thank you.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a few sets of questions.

I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Municipal Government: (1) how much has been paid this fiscal year to Phoenix Advertising Group by your department; (2) what were the services that were purchased or commissioned; (3) were all the services paid for actually received?

The second set of questions, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Justice: (1) how much has been paid this fiscal year to Phoenix Advertising Group by your department; what were the services that were purchased or commissioned; were all the services paid for actually received?

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following questions:

Regarding the Agricultural Corporation of Saskatchewan ,ACS: (1) how much money is outstanding on the \$25 per acre production loan program; (2) what steps are being taken to recover this money; (3) at what date will all monies be recovered; (4) to date how many loans have been paid in full; (5) how many of these loans had write-downs, for what reason, at what rate of interest; and (6) were any loans forgiven; if yes, how many were forgiven; for what reason were the loans forgiven; and what do the forgiven loans total?

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Co-op upgrader: what is the total amount of royalties collected by the government as a result of the Co-op upgrader in the '94-95 fiscal year; what is the total amount of fees received by the government in the '94-95 fiscal year as a result of upgrader operations; and what is the total amount of taxes and any other form of revenue collected by the government concerning the upgrader for the '94-95 fiscal year?

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Lloydminster Bi-Provincial upgrader: (1) what is the total amount of royalties collected by the government as result of the Bi-Provincial upgrader in 1994-95 fiscal year; (2) what is the total amount of fees received by the government in the 1994-95 fiscal year as a result of the upgrader operations; and (3) what is the total amount of taxes and any other form of revenue collected by the government concerning the upgrader for the 1994-95 fiscal year?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope he takes no offence by this because I haven't been able to ask him, but I see a member of my constituency up in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, in your gallery, sitting up behind the clocks — you may not be able to see him — Dennis Barnett, former mayor of St. Walburg, in which capacity he served for many years. Thank you very much for coming down, and it's nice to see you. If everyone would join me in welcoming Dennis here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce a constituent of mine sitting in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Harvey McLane. Harvey is well known, working throughout the province in the Department of Health and working very hard for rural hospitals. He's now also the new candidate for Arm River for the Liberal association. I ask all people to welcome my constituent to this legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and privilege for me to introduce several guests in your gallery today, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. These are very talented people for whom I have a great deal of respect, and have made contributions not only to their communities but the province and, in some instances, to Canada.

If they would stand, please, when I state their names, just so you can know who they are. Pat Edenoste, who has worked extensively with non-profit organizations and coordinated communications and public relations. Ron Osika, who is the former executive manager of corporate affairs for the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation. Harvey McLane, who was introduced by the member from Arm River, who is a

farmer, but is immediate past chairman of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations but remains on the Canadian board. Bob Bjornerud, who is a farmer, as well as being reeve of the RM (rural municipality) of Saltcoats. Linda Trytten, who is very involved in education, very innovative in distance education and in community development in the Rosetown area. And Brodie Partington, who is a recently retired Air Canada Boeing 747 captain.

Would you please warmly welcome those individuals here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have some friends that I would like to welcome through you to the legislature here today. And if they would stand when I announce their name.

Bert Wilson, who is an organization consultant and communications specialist. Steve Helfrick, who is a former provincial civil servant and union shop steward. Steve served more than three years in South Africa with CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) and he's operated a small business and a fishing camp in northern Saskatchewan. Ken Krawetz of Invermay, who is past president of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. Ken's an insurance broker and a farmer from Invermay.

Dennis Barnett of St. Walburg. As we heard earlier, Dennis served as mayor of St. Walburg for 12 years and was director of the Rural Health Coalition as well as spokesperson for the Equal Tax Committee.

Leslie Anderson of Regina. Leslie is the director of communications for Saskatchewan School Trustees Association.

And John Yeo, from Moosomin.

And we welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment as well to recognize the businessman from the Moosomin area, John Yeo. And I would just like to suggest, if you've got any pump problems, call John. He's Mr. Pump Man in Moosomin. So welcome, John, to the Assembly.

I'd like to as well take a moment to recognize Mr. Dale Hasset who's been working with a group and Coalition in Support of the Family. And I think I see a group of students that may be here. He's involved with a school, a private Christian school in P.A. (Prince Albert), if I've got it right.

And I think we'd like to extend a warm welcome to this group who have joined us this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly a very distinguished person sitting in the west gallery. This is a person who is charged with the responsibility of being the provincial secretary for the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan. And he is here today to observe the actions and activities of the very experienced and competent legislators here.

I ask you all to welcome him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two very important people in your gallery, one being my daughter, Heidi Scott, and her friend Shelly Radcliffe, both of Indian Head. There's no school today, so they've come to see the proceedings here. And I ask that all members join in welcoming them here. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 14 students from the Prince Albert Christian School that was referred to by my colleague, the member from Moosomin. I'd also like you to welcome their teachers, Dale Hasset, Gary Mason, Karri Luxton, and Lisa Ehlert, who are accompanying the students. So I'd like you all to give them a warm welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mr. Bob Bjornerud from Saltcoats. He's the reeve of the municipality. I'd like to welcome him here to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — No, there's nobody else standing. I waited until the last, Mr. Speaker.

I want to join with the member from Saltcoats in welcoming Bob Bjornerud to the legislature. Saltcoats of course is my home town. And just a little note: with Bob Bjornerud's great pitching and my great fielding, we managed to capture the over-40 baseball championships in Saskatchewan this year. So although we cooperate on the field, ball field, Mr. Speaker, I think it may be different in the political field. Welcome, Bob.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Twinpak Expansion

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday one of our

growing manufacturing companies located right here in Regina announced a major plant expansion and modernization. Twinpak is in the business, making plastic containers and lids for the dairy, deli, and food industries throughout North America. The Regina plant, Mr. Speaker, is the third largest of its kind in Canada. Twinpak is one of the largest plastics packaging companies in the country.

On Tuesday Twinpak's parent company announced an investment of \$3.65 million to expand the Regina plant and upgrade to the most modern equipment. This investment shows great confidence in Saskatchewan's economy. Twinpak knows it can grow and prosper here because we have a positive business climate, a central location with convenient shipping routes, a stable and skilled workforce, and a quality of life that cannot be matched anywhere.

Twinpak's expansion is good news for our economy for a number of reasons. It's proof that manufacturing companies, particularly those in the plastic sector, can be successful here in Saskatchewan. The expansion will put it in a position to win more new customers. Increased exports of manufactured goods brings revenue to the province.

The company will also offer employees an opportunity to upgrade their skills, and as productivity and sales increase, Twinpak is expected to create more full-time jobs.

Congratulation to Twinpak and everyone involved in making this winning expansion possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Construction of the Langenburg Health Centre

Mr. Knezacek: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to inform this Assembly of some good news that comes from my constituency. Mr. Speaker, a \$2 million tender for the construction of the Langenburg Health Centre has been awarded to a local contractor, Timco Construction of Churchbridge.

The health centre will be a vital part of community services in Langenburg and area. It will link the Centennial Special Care Home with the seniors' lodge, Southview Place. Completion is expected for next January.

As well as creating a very important health facility, the project will also provide spin-off benefits to the local economy through the purchase of materials, the hiring of sub-trades, and the continued employment of Timco's personnel.

Mr. Speaker, the project is a result of a cooperative fund-raising initiative. Funds were provided by the provincial government, the federal infrastructure program, and the Langenburg Union Hospital Board now incorporated into the East Central Health District.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the citizens of Langenburg and surrounding communities, those who took part in the planning process for the facility, the members of the East

Central Health Board, and Timco Construction for their efforts, which will provide enhanced health services and benefit the community for years to come.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Development of Saskatchewan Gold Mine

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, we've all heard stories about the 1800s and the gold rush that occurred in the Klondike and how gold fever attracted and excited people from all over the world.

Well there's excitement once again about gold, and it's all happening at Contact Lake in northern Saskatchewan. What was a prospector's dream in 1979 has now become a reality. This gold mine is the results of cooperative efforts of the provincial government, Cameco, and Uranerz working together. Hundreds of construction jobs were created during the development and further employment has been created for a hundred mining jobs.

The mill can produce about one gold bar a week. Each gold bar has an estimated value of about \$300,000. The significance of this project and its potential to the province was evident when the Premier participated in pouring the first gold bar. Usually when people think about gold in the province of Saskatchewan they are thinking about wheat, but times have changed.

I would like to congratulate everyone who has helped to develop another worthwhile project in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Niche Markets Seminar

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many members have noted in their statements lately, there is a recognized need for the diversification of the Saskatchewan agricultural economy through the development of niche markets for livestock, crops, food processing, as well as home-based businesses, and tourism.

Today in Moose Jaw, another seminar is taking place which will provide information and advice for those who are interested in expanding or altering their operations. This seminar, called Focus on Niche Markets, has developed into an annual event for the entrepreneurs, homemakers, farmers, and community economic development committees.

The program identifies needs and interests of its participants and provides expertise from several resource experts. Today, there are to be presentations on prairie tours, on home business, on specialty and forage crops, on livestock, and on food processing. Resource people are from the University of Saskatchewan, from private business, and from our own Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, this event is held in Moose Jaw, but it addresses

the express needs of people all over the province who are excited about the prospects for Saskatchewan, and optimistic about the opportunities our expanding economy offers them. Events like this, great and small, in cities and in smaller communities, for farm families and for town residents, they show that Saskatchewan is on the move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

MLA Pension Plan

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Associate Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Minister, you are one of five members of the current cabinet lucky enough to be covered under the old MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) pension plan.

If you were to retire next year, you would stand to collect a pension of about \$900,000 by age 80. Do you think this is fair, Mr. Minister? Do you think it's fair to the taxpayers to give you such a lucrative pension, while you and your government are forcing Saskatchewan families to make so many sacrifices? What do you think?

Hon. Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just don't really know how to respond to a question like that. I'm no different than anybody else in this legislature. I've been around for 20 years, and I can assure you that any pension that I get, that I've earned the same as you've earned. And I don't really think question period should be taken up with such questions as you've just put forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I obviously beg to differ with the member that this is not worth the time of the legislature to bring this up.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the other Economic Development minister. Mr. Minister, your government has attacked the taxpayers of this province, but you have done absolutely nothing to restrain yourself. Under the old MLA pension plan you and six of your NDP (New Democratic Party) colleagues are going to become very wealthy at taxpayers' expense. You, sir, you stand to make 1.4 millions of dollars by age 80.

Mr. Minister, instead of restraining taxpayers, why don't you show some self-restraint? Will you rescind the old MLA pension plan and bring your pension into line with the new plan? Will you do that, sir?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I want to answer that question from the member for Rosthern because I'm surprised to hear the Conservative official opposition now falling into the same trap as the Liberal leader, and that is not so much dealing with what the facts are. And it's more important what they don't say than what in fact they do say.

And I think the member from Rosthern well knows that the Government of Saskatchewan in 1978 changed the Saskatchewan MLA pension plan as we did change pension plans for the public service and teachers and others, which has become a money purchase plan to which MLAs contribute, and it is matched and is the most tax friendly pension plan in all of Saskatchewan, in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

That is far different than what is being proposed by the Liberal government in Ottawa which the Leader of the Liberal Party represents in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, where they are not prepared to do that and in fact more or less continue their old pension plan.

In Saskatchewan, and it is well reported even by the Taxpayers Association of Saskatchewan, we have the most friendly pension plan for MLAs in all of Canada, and that was done in 1978.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Deputy Premier is acting as a deputy prime minister and basically saying, I really don't have to answer to anyone about my own pension plan. It's just window-dressing what we're seeing happening in Ottawa.

And, Mr. Minister, you're very well aware of the fact, yes the pension plan was changed. But there are seven members on your side of the House who have lucrative pension plans, such as the new Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, your pension plan amounts to about \$1.7 million by age 80. You're the Minister of Justice. Is this justice? Do you think it's just that Saskatchewan taxpayers, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet, are going to give you \$1.7 million by age 80?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again what I said in my answer to the question from the member from Rosthern. That in 1978 — and I think there were some Conservatives in the House at that time — the pension plan for MLAs was changed. There were some MLAs who were left in the old plan at that time. And I think that's not unusual, Mr. Speaker. There's MLAs who have served in this legislature for well in excess of 20-some years, which is a long time.

But steps were taken in 1978 to make the Saskatchewan pension plan for MLAs, public service, people working out of Crown corporations, all of which was negotiated with the public sector unions, to make the pension plans in this province self-sustaining; so that they continue to pay for themselves and have no obligation on the taxpayer at the time when the individuals, be they MLAs or public servants, retire.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that the Deputy Premier here is just as adamant about his position as the Deputy Prime Minister was, and so I'm going to ask you this

question, Mr. Deputy Premier.

Your salary . . . or your pension is going to be \$1.7 million by the time you turn 80 — \$1.7 million, Mr. Deputy Premier. That's what you are going to take in by the time you reach 80 years old, if you were to retire today. Does that seem fair to you, Mr. Deputy Premier? Or are you going to stand here and defend the actions of the Deputy Prime Minister the same way you have in the previous questions?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is somewhat humorous because in all of my wildest expectations about my longevity I have never expected to live beyond 100 years of age, and I think in the member's calculations opposite I would have to live well in excess of 100 years of age to be able to benefit in the way he indicates we would be able to benefit.

I can't speak for the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and I would never want to be able to do that. I think the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada can speak for herself and can speak on behalf of the Liberal Party, whether they are provincial or federal Liberals, anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm saying is that members of this Legislative Assembly contribute 9 per cent of their salary to their superannuation. And I think that's a fair contribution. And I think, Mr. Speaker, those people who have served here for many years have contributed significantly. But the point that's important to be made here, that it was the New Democratic Party government of this province in 1978 that made the first moves in all of Canada to reform the superannuation plans of members of the legislature and now has set the course for others who have had to follow. And my only wish is that the Liberal government in Ottawa, and under the encouragement of the Leader of the Liberal Party in this legislature, would follow suit to what this government did in 1978.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Premier, you may think this is humorous, but I can tell you the people of Saskatchewan don't think it's very humorous at all. The old pension plan, the old pension plan, the one that you and other members of your cabinet . . . is what we are talking about, not the current one, Mr. Deputy Premier.

This brings us, this brings us to the big winner, the big winner in this pension sweepstakes — the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan. The Premier who on TV last Sunday said that everybody had to make sacrifices, everybody had to make sacrifices. What he should have said was, everybody but a few members of my cabinet. That's what he should have said.

You haven't, the Premier hasn't, you haven't, Mr. Deputy Premier, sacrificed one dime of your pension. And the Premier's pension if he reaches the age of 80 will be \$1.8 million; \$1.8 million is what he stands to collect from the taxpayers of this province. Who pays for that, Mr. Deputy Premier? The people of Saskatchewan pay for that.

My question is very simple. Do you think this is fair? Do you think this is fair? Do you think this: you and your colleagues deserve those kinds of pensions, funded by the taxpayers of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the members of the opposition have followed the pattern of the Leader of the Liberal Party. They have so desperately looked for something to be critical of in the budget and found nothing that they have to latch onto something like this.

Let me point out, Mr. Speaker, what MLAs of this legislature have in fact contributed. Let me remind you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of this House, that it was under this government in 1991 that cabinet ministers agreed to take a 5 per cent cut in their salary. That was a contribution. Now that does not meet, Mr. Speaker, the needs of deficit reduction, of debt repayment, but it is part of sharing what other people in this province have had to do in order to bring about a balanced budget.

Let me remind the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that MLAs of this Legislative Assembly, including the members opposite, have frozen their salary since 1990 and continue to freeze it, and I think that's the appropriate thing to do. But I also ask the members opposite to consider what they did to this province when they were in government where they spent money on their friends and the former premier would load the briefcase of anybody who came along to collect money and put this province into a debt of almost \$15 billion, which the taxpayers of this province and our children and their children are going to have to pay for generations to come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Premier, since you won't answer the question, Mr. Deputy Premier, I'll answer it for you.

No, it isn't fair. It isn't fair to the taxpayers who are being forced by your government to pay \$1.8 million to the Premier of this province in pension benefits. That is not fair to the taxpayers of this province. Everybody knows it's not fair and that's why the pension plan in 1979 was changed, except for seven members of your cabinet, Mr. Premier. But your pension has not been changed. Everyone else's is an entirely different one, and you know that, Mr. Deputy Premier.

You, the Deputy Premier, the Justice minister, the Economic Development minister, the Associate Economic Development minister — and the list goes on — you and you alone are exempt from the sacrifices that all other people in this province are being asked to be made, Mr. Deputy Premier.

Why can't you just do the right thing, Mr. Deputy Premier — admit your pension is way out of line with everyone else's in this Legislative Assembly and bring it into line with the rest of the members of this Assembly? Then for once you'll have done something right for the taxpayers of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well first of all, I'm going to address the question of comparison that the Leader of the Opposition raises, Mr. Speaker.

But first of all, let me say this. I happen to know that the Premier of this province makes a considerable sacrifice to do the work that he is doing. It is a job that takes dedication, commitment.

Well the members opposite laugh, Mr. Speaker. But I want to tell them that it is a job that he has done since 1991, which takes dedication, commitment, and an awful lot of courage, in spite of the opposition by the Tories and by Liberals in this House, as we took this province from a financial crisis situation to a balance and surplus in 1994, a balance in '94-95, and a balance into the future which is going to be sustainable.

Now that took some commitment and that took some courage and I think it took some sacrifice, Mr. Speaker.

Now let me make the comparison. Let me compare what this Premier has done to what . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I gave the Leader of the Opposition sufficient time to ask his question; asked other members to give him the opportunity to ask his question. I wish he would now listen to the Deputy Premier as he gives his answer.

An Hon. Member: — Seventeen seconds left.

The Speaker: — Order. I would like to remind the member from Rosthern that I determine the length of the answers and questions and not the member from Rosthern.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm relieved at that.

I want to say to the members opposite: when they make comparisons, I would like them to compare what the Premier of this province does and what he gets paid in remuneration to what they paid one George Hill, committed over \$1 million in severance to their friend.

I'm prepared, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to compare what the Premier of this province contributes to this province to what Senator Berntson, a Conservative senator, does and what he gets, and while he double-dips, while he gets his provincial MLA pension and gets a senator's salary, just as a senator that the member of . . . that the Liberal leader has . . .

The Speaker: — Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GRIP Premiums

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Yesterday, Mr. Minister, your Minister of Finance engaged in a debate over who has done

more to harm farm families: the NDP in Saskatchewan or the Liberals in Ottawa. During the exchange, she said, and I quote:

. . . (I think if) we've done anything to agriculture, you wait until next Monday.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure it'll be a toss-up as to who has betrayed rural Saskatchewan more. It will truly be a clash of the Titans. My question to the Minister of Agriculture: Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you would acknowledge that it was the Premier and his government that got the ball rolling when you unilaterally and retroactively broke legal contracts with farm families in this province.

Could you confirm that the changes to GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) your government implemented were responsible for the Premier to pilfer \$188 million away from farmers and the federal Liberals to take 317 more. Would you confirm that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that we finally have the opposition parties coming around to agriculture after two or three weeks in the House . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Right. Mr. Speaker, it's also rather strange that the Leader of the Opposition, when he's at the Saskatchewan Cattle Breeders' Association, stands up and says that government should get out of agriculture — it should have no support programs whatsoever — and at the same time comes back in the House and says that in the best year that Saskatchewan farmers have had in quite a long time, they should get an \$860 million pay-out. It's rather ironic whether or not he thinks that would fit in with our trade agreements that he so often talks about.

Going back, we certainly did not take the GRIP surplus away from the farmers, Mr. Speaker. We in this province have changed our focus on agriculture. We have maintained . . . we are spending our money smarter. We've maintained a safety net for farmers. We've helped farmers with diversification and value added.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers in 1994 had the best income they've had since 1980-something. And a good portion of that income, in fact the major portion, can be attributed to the diversification that the farmers did in this province, and we helped them to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — When Monday comes around and the federal budget has been presented, and like your Premier, the Prime Minister decides to download on the provinces, I'm wondering what your response will be. I'm wondering how you'll react when really he's simply following your lead.

Will it be a response like you gave in the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*, February 1, '95 when talking about your GRIP program, and you said: "It was about enough to pay the premiums on GRIP. Some had enough money left over to buy a box of beer, but not much else." That's what you were talking about, the

people that you're charged with representing — enough to buy a box of beer, Mr. Minister.

When the Liberals see the Premier of Saskatchewan — the province with the most arable land in the country — confiscating GRIP premiums from farm families, they think it's okay. I'm curious, Mr. Minister. Tell us how you're going to feign concern and outrage when you've already set the precedent? What kind of a deal did you cut with the Liberals in Ottawa that would let you off the hook, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, the deal we cut with the federal government is well-known. We negotiated a new safety net to replace GRIP — not as rich a one as we would like, but we negotiated a deal. We now have a deal with the federal government for a replacement for GRIP.

Alberta is now getting out of GRIP and they haven't got a replacement, and they are going to have to negotiate with the new federal budget.

We have already put in place a reasonable program. We negotiated the best deal we could get with the feds.

And we are supporting our farmers in both the safety net and with ag innovation fund where we're going to have \$91 million going into the development side to create jobs and to create markets for Saskatchewan farmers and to continue with the diversification that our farmers have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It appears that this government has been prepared to retroactively change absolutely everything except the pensions of the members on the front bench. One of the other things they've decided to retroactively change has been the plans that they've made for job creation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, whatever plans the NDP claim to have had — the plan to create 30,000 jobs; the plan to have 700 new companies come forward; the plans to rebuild rural Saskatchewan — those plans have failed. In fact the only success they've had in their planning has been to follow through on raising taxes, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Your *Partnership for Renewal* targets were set before your government received windfall profits from oil and gambling, sir. How do you explain the difference between your Minister of Finance's forecast in her budget of 12,700 jobs created by 1998 and your own projection of 30,000 jobs by the year 2000? I mean is your Finance minister working from a different plan than you are?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to respond to the question because it gives me an opportunity to explain how the business people in the province are making out in

creating jobs in the province, and they're doing very, very well.

The *Partnership for Renewal* document which was created by business people, working people, and cooperatives along with the government in 1992 and released to the public in November of 1992, predicted and estimated 30,000 jobs by the year 2000. So far in the first two years of that program there were 5,000 jobs created by business in 1993 and 2,000 net jobs in 1994 for an average of 3,500 per year. And some simple arithmetic would tell the minister if you multiply 3,500 by eight years you'll get about 30,000 jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Minister, I suggest you read your Minister of Finance's budget address on page 32. The minister knows that StatsCanada have rebased their employment numbers for every province in Canada. The NDP job creation record is bad under the old and the new numbers. They have yet to get back to the 7,000 jobs lost since they took power for a full year in 1992, Mr. Speaker — a pathetic record in a period of booming commodity prices, strong export markets, and a low dollar.

My question to the minister: in December 1994 you evaluated your own progress, Mr. Minister, and you gave yourself, and I quote, "good grades". How can you give yourself good grades when even under the new StatsCan numbers your government has created 1,000 fewer jobs than when you took power in 1991?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The *Partnership for Renewal* document which you're referring to — which I say again was a creation of the business people as well as cooperatives, working people, along with their government — I think is working very effectively. The former president of the chamber of commerce, Mel Watson, referred to it as the bible for the business people on economic development in the province of Saskatchewan. Mel Watson is not a well-known supporter of the New Democratic Party but believes firmly the work that was done in building this partnership is working very well.

And this is the sense of all of the chambers that I have met with, and I've met with many of them across the province in the past year. The gloom and doom that you continue to perpetuate here in the Assembly is not borne out in the business community anywhere in the province. And I say to you that while you were driving around in the limousine with the Senator this past summer, spreading your gloom and doom, it wasn't being bought then and it's not being bought now because it's being done for one reason only. That's for the betterment of politics for you and the candidates who are with you here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's record is tied to its own labour legislation and high tax and utility rates which have undermined the attempts to create jobs under your *Partnership for Renewal* plan.

Mr. Minister, just the Thursday prior to the budget coming

down there was a new document put forward and announced at the University of Regina. And that document tells specifically about how it is nothing could be done in Saskatchewan except retirement. And there should be 30,000 jobs created by the year 2000. One of the things, sir, that you do not understand is that your particular record does not stand up to scrutiny.

My question to you, sir: it is obvious that your own self-grading is less than objective. Will you provide the evidence to this House that shows exactly what jobs your plan has created and what companies and investment has come to this province as a result of your policies? Will you table that in this House, please.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that there have been many, many jobs created, not by the Government of Saskatchewan, but by the small-business community. And you can continue to attack them for their lack of job creation if you want, but it's not being bought by anyone in the province.

I don't even think, to look at the expression on the face of the member sitting behind you, that he buys your line about the lack of initiative on the small business in the province of Saskatchewan.

He knows that you made a commitment to this Assembly that you would bring a project a week to my office. You promised that. You promised that. It is now I think week 130. We should have had 130 projects. You promised to bring them to me week by week. We can no more believe you on this issue than you can on your promise to bring a project a week. You haven't brought any. And the people of the province know that if you were elected as premier you would bring nothing but disaster and failure to the economy of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, not that anyone wouldn't really trust your numbers and your claims in the province, but the facts remain the same: 1,000 fewer jobs today, this month, this year, than when you took power in 1991. That is fact. But could you be kind enough to tell us how many companies have left Saskatchewan since you took office? Will you table those numbers as well, sir?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the out-migration from Saskatchewan is a public document and you can go to the library and get the numbers. Or I will get them for you. And what it will show is that out-migration has slowed significantly, slowed significantly since the days that the member from Estevan and his group were in government, dropped significantly. The population of Saskatchewan has now grown for eight straight quarters. Each quarter the population has grown. And that's the first time since the mid-'80s. So get your numbers straight.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The population of Saskatchewan now stands at 1.016 million and that has been growing for eight straight quarters of the past calendars. And I say to you, Madam

Member, you should get your numbers straight because just like StatsCanada numbers you were using on the first day of the session, you're absolutely wrong on the population. It has been growing, will continue to grow as long as we are lucky enough not to have a Liberal government in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 21 — An Act to amend The Securities Act, 1988

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Securities Act, 1988, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 22 — A Bill to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that a Bill to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, you were being so efficient today that when you dealt with ministerial statements it was so quick I didn't get an opportunity to rise. I ask leave of the House, if I may, to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

SaskTel-Norstar Venture

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud today that a SaskTel subsidiary has secured a \$46 million construction contract with Ameritech, the fourth largest telephone company in the world, to do a major construction job in the United States.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that this is the largest ever international contract that has ever been undertaken by SaskTel or by a subsidiary of SaskTel. Norstar Network Services, a joint venture of SaskTel and Norstar Communications Ltd., will build fibre optic coaxial cable networks in Chicago and Detroit over the next two years.

These networks will bring 235,000 customers in those cities the next generation of information highway services such as video on demand and enhanced entertainment and business services. Some analysts project that this will be a \$50 billion business in this decade. About 30 per cent of that total will be spent on construction.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, Norstar was searching for a business partner and chose SaskTel, the company with arguably the most fibre optic experience on the continent of North America. In 1984 the company built what was then the world's longest fibre network right here in Saskatchewan. And it was SaskTel technicians who worked on the fibre optic controlling system inside the Channel Tunnel, the largest construction project of the 20th century.

So the corporation is extremely well positioned to play a leading role in future fibre optic ventures like this one throughout the world. Contracts like this say something to me, Mr. Speaker. It says that we have good people. It says that we're competitive. And it says that we're world class. And it says that we do it right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Construction will begin almost immediately. And the best news of all is that there is strong likelihood of future contracts in other American cities. New businesses and contracts such as this one are absolutely essential to keep SaskTel an asset for the people of the province as the corporation faces increasing competition. It also provides a diversified source of revenues for SaskTel and income from outside of this country, from other parts of the world, which will benefit the people of Saskatchewan as these kinds of diversifications take place.

As SaskTel employs about 3,700 people in 60 communities throughout the province and is a significant driver in the Saskatchewan economy, I think that is in the interest of everyone who lives in this province.

So on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I salute Norstar and SaskTel on this major international contract and look forward to many other such contracts in the months and years ahead.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I suppose this is good news for SaskTel and the province of Saskatchewan because perhaps this is one of the few government initiatives that will create some jobs in the province of Saskatchewan. But I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the government would deal with a multinational corporation, and an American one to boot. It seems that philosophically this government over the years has had a great deal of difficulty with multinational corporations and especially American ones.

When you look over what is involved with this new enterprise that they're taking on, you see it involves video. And I wonder very much, Mr. Speaker, whether this is sort of along the same line as the government's SaskTel operation of the 1-900 numbers where the government is allowing SaskTel . . . foreign operators to use SaskTel phone lines to siphon money out of Saskatchewan's people's pockets for sex lines. They're also using the same type of technology, Mr. Speaker, to sell pornography into the hotels through SaskTel's lines, Mr. Speaker. And I would hope very much that this new project is not going in that direction, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by repeating some of the minister's comments. His comment that contracts like this one says that we have very good people. Contracts like this says that we are competitive, and that it says that we can compete world class. I could not agree more with the minister's comments, Mr. Speaker. There is no question of the talents of the people of Saskatchewan.

Further to that however, one must indicate that, and acknowledge, that fibre optics, having been discovered in this province, has not been utilized to our greatest benefit. Very, very often in fact, fibre optics has been given over to other places and we have lost some of our industry in this province to elsewhere.

There's another comment that the minister made and that is that this kind of a contract is one that is going to be essential for SaskTel to remain an asset for the people of the province given the kind of competition it's facing, and I hope that the government is indeed examining what is transpiring in telecommunications.

It is a serious thing when business people in this province, this year, have been approached by American telecommunications to purchase a new kind of service that in fact in the second that they punch in their numbers here, that it can be picked up by the telephone company in the United States and put through on their lines at cheaper rates. That in fact will bring forward the kind of competition that we really seriously have to look at if we want the long-term best interests of the people of Saskatchewan to prevail.

So as much as we are excited as a Liberal caucus with the announcement of this contract with SaskTel and Norstar, we hope that in fact the Government of Saskatchewan is looking at the security of the people of this province, and in particular the real asset of Sask Telecommunications in the long term. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as it relates to return no. 1, I would move that it be converted to motion for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — Motion for return (debatable).

(1430)

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. As I was saying yesterday when I was so rudely interrupted by the 5 o'clock end of the day here, I've been in this legislature since 1986 and I've sat through a number of budgets — one a year, sort of thing. I've listened to question periods and I've listened to budget responses.

What strikes me about this one, even much more so than any other provincial budget, is I listen to question period and I listen to the opposition Conservatives and I listen to the third party Liberals, and you know, Mr. Speaker, I can't tell the difference. If I closed my eyes I would not know who was asking the question. One's the same as the other.

I listened to their budget debate very, very carefully. Again, Mr. Speaker, if you closed your eyes you wouldn't know whether it was a Conservative or a Liberal mouthing the words.

And the thing that strikes me about this budget is that question period as we saw today, today being the last day of the budget speech debate, the last day of the budget speech debate, not one question to the Minister of Finance, not one question from either of the two opposition parties.

Why are they so quiet about this budget document that was presented in this legislature last Thursday? Could it be because it's the first time there's been a balanced surplus budget in Saskatchewan since 1982 when the Conservatives took office? Could it be because in addition to the \$119 million surplus in the fiscal year now ending we're projecting a \$25 million surplus next year and projecting balanced surplus budgets for the following three years right up to 1999? Could it be that they're so silent because in this budget we have real and meaningful tax relief for people — up to \$300 for dual income families? Three hundred dollars is real tax relief. I'm delighted that we're finally to the point where we're able to do that and continue to provide balanced budgets into the future.

Could it be that the opposition parties are so silent because in this budget we addressed real needs with real initiatives? We've addressed in this budget JobStart and student jobs and initiatives to help to provide job opportunities.

Could it be because in this budget we've provided some real health initiatives that they're so silent on it? Could it be that \$20.3 million for health services in communities creating, Mr. Speaker, 460 jobs — 460 jobs in health. Could it be that that has silenced the opposition on this provincial budget?

Could it be that the fact that the cost of running the provincial government is down \$300 million from when we took office in 1991 — down \$300 million by shifting some of the priorities into the much needed services to people? Could it be that many of the priorities are right on? Is that why the opposition is so silent?

An Hon. Member: — Could be the news was too good.

Mr. Trew: — Could be that the news is simply too good for them and they know there's no weakness in this budget. There's

nothing for the opposition parties to attack. I'm delighted to stand here as a government member and say that. That must really hurt for the opposition parties to be unable to attack this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I remember a politician who said there's so much more we can be. Who would that have been? There's so much more we can be, he said. This was the member for Estevan, the former Conservative premier of Saskatchewan, said it in 1982, who said yesterday in *Hansard*, and I'm going to quote this:

Personally I think Saskatchewan should have higher targets, that we should be stretching our limits . . .

I think Saskatchewan should have higher targets — sounds like a little nuance on, there's so much more we can be.

An Hon. Member: — Saskatoon Greystone.

Mr. Trew: — The member for Saskatoon Greystone said that in *Hansard*, February 22, 1995. The member for Meadow Lake deserves full marks for paying attention to an otherwise remarkably boring speech delivered by that member yesterday.

But the similarities between we have to have higher targets and there's so much more we can be — nice words, sounds expansionary. Well we heard it from a right-winger in 1982 and we're hearing it from another right-wing leader in 1995.

But how can we take that seriously, Mr. Speaker? How can we take the Liberal leader seriously when on the budget the Liberal leader was going on about 1995 income tax projections are even lower than before. She was bemoaning the fact that provincial personal income tax is going to be lower this coming year than it was last year.

Well earlier, not three minutes ago, I was talking about an up to \$300 tax break for a dual income family. Now you can't give that kind of a tax break and not collect less income tax on the personal income tax side. But what the Liberal leader conveniently forgot is that corporate income tax is projected to rise \$29 million and corporate capital tax is projected to rise \$27 million. Mr. Speaker, that's up \$56 million on the corporate side while the personal tax side goes down.

Now I shouldn't be surprised that a Liberal leader would be mouthing the same things in Saskatchewan that Liberals and Tories in Ottawa have been doing since . . . certainly since I was born. And the year I was born, 1953, was the last year that corporations and individuals both paid roughly 50 per cent of the income tax in Canada. The last time I checked, that has been skewed to the point where individuals pay something like 84 per cent of the personal income taxes, leaving about 16 per cent of income taxes for corporations. This budget does something in a minor way to try and make that adjustment back in some minor degree.

How can we take the Leader of the Liberal Party seriously, Mr.

Speaker, when — and again I'll quote from yesterday — she says: The NDP has provided irrefutable evidence they will spend every tax dollar they can get their hands on.

Well that kind of flies in the face of fact, Mr. Speaker — the fact that the cost of running the provincial government is down \$300 million this year from 1991; the fact that we have been able to realize those efficiencies. And those efficiencies, I might add, have been done with a varying degree of difficulty. Ask some of the several hundred civil servants that were asked to pay what for us can only be described as the ultimate price, and the ultimate price of course is them ceasing to continue their employment as civil servants; in other words, their services were terminated. Ask them if the price was particularly low or if we could have extracted more from them.

Mr. Speaker, we asked a very significant amount out of a number of people. I'm pleased that the number was relatively small and that most of the downsizing has been done through attrition and normal retirements. But for everyone that actually lost their job and didn't want to lose their job, no words can be comforting enough. They paid the ultimate price.

On the other hand, there was some things that were significantly easier to do — things like the Premier continues to drive a 1989 Buick. The Premier of the province of Saskatchewan drives a 1989 Buick with a growing number of kilometres on it.

All of the cabinet with the exception of two, are driving vehicles that were owned by the province of Saskatchewan's Central Vehicle Agency prior to the election of the New Democratic government in October 1991.

The two exceptions are the Minister of Environment and the former minister of Energy. Both have natural gas fuelled minivans, natural gas being potentially one of the fuels of the future.

So every cabinet minister driving vehicles that date 1990 or earlier is a step. It certainly flies in the face of what the former Conservative minister of Finance did when he bought a full-sized van as his vehicle in the dying months, within six months of the provincial election of 1991. He bought this van with a trailer hitch so he could pull his boat to the lake and enjoy his last summer at taxpayers' expense.

How can we take seriously, Mr. Speaker, a Liberal leader that talked about giving credit to the federal Liberal government. She talked about the — and I want to quote out of *Hansard*, yesterday, February 22 — she says, and I quote:

Oil revenues weren't the only thing that covered up the NDP's bad planning. They got more — not less — more money . . . than they . . . planned on.

Talking about the federal government. And you know what? The Liberal leader was right. The Canada Assistance Plan, we got eleven and a half million dollars more than we'd planned on. And we also got \$15 million more out of established program funding from the federal Liberal government. That's a total of twenty-six and a half million dollars more.

What the Liberal leader forgot, very conveniently, was that

equalization payments were down \$31 million, and that other federal government revenue was down \$6 million, for a total of 37 million, leaving on balance the provincial treasury ten and a half million dollars short. Now she may sing the Hallelujah Chorus and the praises to the federal Liberal government for short-changing the province of Saskatchewan ten and a half million dollars. I don't think that warrants us starting the wave or anything like that for the federal Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen repeatedly things taken out of context, facts partially presented. We've seen an individual that, well, today introduced some Liberal candidates; on other days we've seen her introduce people as part of the Liberal family. We've seen her introduce a fair number of former Tories. I've talked about a number of them before. I'm just going to leave that alone. I don't want to enter into that in this budget debate. But we see a whole lot of Conservatives who are now Liberals. We see a whole lot of Liberals who became Conservatives and now some of them are slipping back to the Liberal Party.

The new politics is real interesting, Mr. Speaker. The new politics of let's get in touch with the grass roots of the province; let's try riding around in Senator Sparrow's limousine; and this is the way to get in touch with the grass roots of the people. It's really interesting to me to see that.

The Leader of the Liberal Party is the same leader who promised 130 weeks ago that she would deliver to the Minister of Economic Development an idea a week for job creation — an idea a week, 130 weeks ago. When the Minister of Economic Development reminded the Leader of the Liberal Party of that just about 10 or 15 minutes ago, I heard . . . well what I heard is, I will; just call an election. Well that's kind of a little twist on a job project a week. Oh just wait until the election and then I'll dump 100 and how many? — 180 job ideas, 180 all at once? I don't think that the member opposite can do it.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to stand here and support this provincial budget. I want to commend the Minister of Finance, the cabinet, for the terrific job that they have done in rallying behind the leadership of the Premier in bringing Saskatchewan's finances to the state they are now, to the state where we can refocus. Instead of focusing in on a debt, on a deficit problem, we can now refocus and go after job creation with the same vigour and determination and with the same great results that we've had with the fiscal situation.

I'm looking forward to us doing similar things respecting jobs. I will be proudly voting and supporting this provincial budget.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to stand in this Assembly and take a few moments just to bring a few points forward in regards to the budget speech debate that we heard presented by the Minister of

Finance just about a week ago.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened for the last few days to a number of government members stand in this Assembly and give the minister glowing accolades for the budget which she presented, which I'm beginning to wonder where all the accolades are coming from as the budget was sure devoid of a lot of information and any real growth or opportunity in this province.

Now we can give the minister . . . they can certainly give the minister glowing reports and give her some accolades in the fact that the budget is balanced at the present time.

But the interesting part is how was the budget balanced. Was the budget balanced on the basis of good government, good management, or as we have seen and as the Provincial Auditor has pointed out, and even at least the Alberta Finance minister was willing to recognize, that it was good fortune more than anything that allowed the minister to balance the books this year.

And I trust that as we go into the next number of years, I believe the minister presented to us a four-year plan to maintain surplus budgets. But it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, what kind of a plan.

It's easy to forecast tomorrow that you'll have a \$24 million surplus in the next budget or \$115 million surplus, but can the minister forecast what resource revenues will be? And this year up a whopping 200, over \$200 million in resource revenues which the government didn't really plan for; it didn't realize it might come in.

And those are the types of things that come at the spur of the moment; they're cyclical in nature. And we're going to be asking the minister what has the minister done to offset the fact that that resource revenue may not be there next year.

What about agriculture? We've seen a significant increase this year. And I believe the Minister of Agriculture pointed out the fact that even on the news today, the media brought out the fact that agriculture had a major net return, the first glowing report in the agricultural community since 1988.

But the fact is as well, Mr. Speaker, that while agriculture is looking great today, it may not be there tomorrow. We have to pray that we get some good, solid weather conditions, sound weather conditions; that there's a decent crop next year; that the prices remain where they are.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as much as we would like to, if we could maintain the present expense level and the cost of the inputs in agriculture, it certainly . . . agriculture would be probably presenting a very positive picture next year.

So these are some of the things that I think we must take into consideration. And I think it would have been only appropriate for the minister to acknowledge as her colleague did in Alberta, that there were some circumstances that took place this year that allowed the government to bring in a surplus budget two years ahead of schedule. The fact that that balance was achieved this

year, the minister certainly can receive credit for that.

However, people across this province have aided the minister in achieving this goal. And, Mr. Speaker, now all of a sudden we hear the Premier and cabinet ministers running around this province and saying thank you to the people of Saskatchewan, while last year and even up until the presentation of the budget, the Premier and the Finance minister and many of the colleagues across the way would continue to say: no, we didn't increase taxes; no, we didn't charge Saskatchewan people more. But people have been telling me that's not true. Because they've been asking me, they've been reminding me, about their power bills, about their telephone bills, about their energy bills.

And on that basis, I can say it's at least give the Minister of Energy . . . it took a new Minister of Energy and Mines to at least look at the SaskEnergy rates and give back a reduction of 6.5 which, yes, it's appreciated, but it still doesn't come . . . and doesn't meet the fact that the price of natural gas has gone down by more than 10 per cent. So they give back a little bit.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, as we will see in the future and as we see in the years, will see in the next few months, this government is continuing to rely on the family of Crown corporations to basically tax the people of the province through the back door in order to meet their obligations.

Let me take a look at health care. This government stands up and the members stand up and tell us how good health care is. Yesterday we raised the point about a gentleman who called us because he's been on a waiting-list for some 17 months for eye surgery. And because of his problem, his eyes deteriorating, his vision deteriorating, the specialists even bumped him up to an emergency list.

But they had to tell him last week: sorry, that emergency list has just been backed off a bit because the funding for eye services at City Hospital in Saskatoon have been cut off and we have to wait until the new budget year before we can continue providing the service.

And that's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. But what it does is it points out the fact that these members aren't being totally honest with the people of Saskatchewan when they say we have such a good service and we haven't taxed.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people across rural Saskatchewan — not only rural Saskatchewan but even in the city of Regina and Saskatoon — who are facing difficulties. And I've visited patients in hospitals in both of our major centres. And it's interesting to note some of the comments you get from people in discussing our health care system and where we are today and where we were yesterday when maybe in some cases some of these patients were in the hospital two or three years ago.

What I'm finding, Mr. Speaker, is that there are many people very disturbed with the trend in health care, very disturbed with the way the change has taken place, and disturbed with the fact that this government said they needed to cut 52 hospitals across this province. And guess where the cuts were made — in rural Saskatchewan where people have to travel great distances.

Fifty-two hospitals were cut. Positions for nurses and staff people were cut. And not only just in the 52 hospitals but right across this province there's been reductions in staff, care, and services, Mr. Speaker. And that was all because they were going to save some money. And yet, Mr. Speaker, how much money was saved?

Look at the expenditures in health in this year's budget — \$1.56 billion. No different than it was back in 1991. It was \$1.5 billion then; it's \$1.5 billion today. The same amount of expenditure with a lot less services to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that many of the nurses who lost jobs, many of the orderlies and the staff people, the cleaning people and many of these facilities who had . . . that was an extra dollar that was coming into their homes, are grateful today to this government for what they've done with health care.

How many of the people across Saskatchewan who were cut, who felt the impact of the cuts in health care, are pleased to see the family of Crown corporations in this province continuing to grow.

Mr. Speaker, this government prides itself on being a compassionate government. In a lot of cases I don't find there's a lot of . . . people feeling that there was a lot of compassion shown in the way the cuts were made.

Mr. Speaker, in a number of instances I've run across situations where people have been forced to go to other communities for the care they need. And when I talk about being forced to go to other communities, we were discussing this just the other day. Just recently I asked the Minister of Health why the community of Avonlea,, who have the finances, the resources, and people within the community are willing to put up the resources to build a private care home, a 40-bed care home, why that community cannot receive a licence to build that care home.

And yet there are people in need of care home services in that community and in the surrounding area. And the government says, the minister two weeks ago told us, wait until next week. That was last week. He said wait until next week and I've got a major announcement that I'll be making. And I'm sure you will be happy with that announcement.

Well, what was the announcement? The announcement, Mr. Minister, was an increase of \$20 million to health care — 5 million this year, with 15.3 million in '95-96. And where's it all going? It's all going into expanded home care services.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing wrong with home care services. In fact I think that home care meets a very definite need in allowing people to remain in their homes as long as it's physically possible for them to do so, and as long as it's feasible for proper and adequate care and cost-efficient care.

But there comes a time, Mr. Speaker, when many people find it very difficult and it would seem to me, as I look at the numbers and as I look at the money that's going into home care and as it

was pointed out to me last night, home care becomes more costly than offering care in a special care home.

And so we have to ask the minister, where are you today? Where is the minister with this big announcement? He basically led the people of Avonlea to believe that in this major announcement that he would also come out with a response to their request as to where the . . . their request was for a licence to operate their care home.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can see that there are many people across this province who are concerned, and our elderly are very concerned. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's not just our caucus. It's not just people around the province who have been talking to our Conservative caucus about the concerns. We even find that their own members are having grave difficulty in understanding what has transpired in the health care field, how they have decimated health care. And it's obvious the member from Rosetown-Elrose doesn't really want to hear about the decimation in health care.

And I refer to a letter to the editor by a Dr. Lewis Draper who made some suggestions regarding health care, who brought forward the fact that he felt there were some significant costs that have been inflicted upon the people of Saskatchewan because the government didn't have a real plan in place when they decided to amalgamate smaller hospital districts into large districts and when they determined that they were going to cut 52 hospitals. And I can appreciate his concerns because a number of those hospitals were in his constituency.

The member represents the Assiniboia-Gravelbourg riding. And the member suggested that on the basis of acute care beds and physical presence there would be beds available at Ponteix, and he's talking looking at a 50 mile radius, and he's not necessarily referring to the fact that we resurrect all 52 hospitals, and nor am I, Mr. Speaker. I realize and most people realize that there were appropriate cuts and reductions in hospitals around the province. But he's suggesting that if we even looked at a 50 mile radius that there would be beds available at Ponteix, 50 miles from Swift Current; Mankota, 50 miles from Ponteix and Gravelbourg; and Coronach, 50 miles from Assiniboia, in addition to the acute care beds in Gravelbourg and Assiniboia.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, if the government would have taken the time to very systematically look at the problems in health care, they would have realized it wasn't the hospitals out there that were operating that was creating the problem. It is the way funding was being allocated. And a lot of these centres were down to maybe 3 or 4 or 5 acute care beds, and they were becoming costly.

But I think if we would have looked at areas where you could have put a hospital . . . and it may not have been a large centre, but as long as the centre had . . . and I have to agree with Mr. Draper, that even 50 miles away you knew that there was a small . . . Or the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker. The member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, if he would . . . As he's indicated, if you would have looked at it systematically and put a centre or a hospital or a number of acute care beds, whether it was a 10-bed hospital or a 12-bed acute care facility, it would meet the need out there.

And I find, Mr. Speaker, just right in the newspaper today about an individual who was brought in from Melville to the Plains Health Centre with a broken leg, went to go home, told that they could hire an ambulance or get someone privately to take them home, and found out the ambulance trip was going to cost them \$288, when the ambulance was sitting here and making the trip back to Melville anyway.

And they were sent out because they needed the bed in Regina, and they were being sent to their home centre. Well she's fortunate; she can be sent back to Melville. There's a hospital there. But there are many other communities where, where do you send patients?

(1500)

And I've had individuals tell me that they've actually had nurses complaining about people who have been sent out of our large urban centres who should not have been sent out. And there's a clear example even in my own community of an individual who should have spent a few more days receiving care before she was sent home to her . . . actually sent not to the hospital but to her own home. And, Mr. Speaker, it nearly cost her her foot. And I think that certainly doesn't speak very well of health care in this province.

As I indicated, I appreciate the fact and we will acknowledge that certainly there is nothing wrong with putting more money into home care. But I think one of the things that still has to be reviewed — and I trust the Minister of Health has taken the time to review this — is how home care services are handled, the type of home care services that are made available. Because it seems to me that even with home care a lot of times money is wasted in the type of services we render through the home care program. I believe it's very important that we look at the medical needs of individuals.

And one of the things I bring up and that was raised with me even last night is the fact that we've got people running into homes of home care patients and cleaning on a monthly basis. Most people do a thorough cleaning maybe once a year, maybe twice a year. But is it necessary to do a full house cleaning on a monthly basis? I think those are some things we need to look at.

Was it necessary to take away the ability of the neighbour's son or daughter to go out and shovel the walk or mow the grass, and that little bit of extra money they could make, by sending home care in to do that work, Mr. Speaker? So those are some of the things that people are saying. I don't think we need . . . home care needs should be providing those types of services.

I guess the other area, Mr. Speaker, and that speaks very loudly about this government, is the fact that this budget never mentioned a thing about gambling. And the auditor has pointed out that there are significant revenues that will be generated through gambling that will be coming into the coffers of this government. The only thing that . . . the government did talk about the fact that they've increased funding to help individuals who've become addicted to gambling. And I guess it's only fair to say yes, that's appropriate, and yes, it's fine. And we acknowledge that that's a worthwhile endeavour.

But, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Harper: — To ask leave for the introduction of guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues for giving me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you a long-time friend of mine, Mr. Jim Feley who is sitting in your west gallery. Jim is accompanied here today with his son Jeff, and, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of introducing them to the members here a few days back, and they had the opportunity of taking in the proceedings of the House at that time. They so much enjoyed it at that time, Mr. Speaker, they came back for a repeat performance.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all of my colleagues in the House to offer them a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE) (continued)

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we're also pleased to see these distinguished guests having taken this time to come to the House and listen to the debate. And we trust that even the debate this afternoon will give them a little more information and food for thought that they can mull over as to the truthfulness of everything that the budget the government is throwing at them . . . on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before we had introduction of guests, I indicated that one thing that the government neglected to do was talk about their gambling program and the amount of revenue that they endeavour to bring in by gambling. And I guess the reason they neglected to do it, because it's been a . . . the portfolio of gambling has been one that has weighed heavily on many people's shoulders.

And I note that over the period of three short years, we are now on gambling minister number 5 which is an indication to me that it is a portfolio that not a lot of members were really looking forward to and found it very difficult and were glad to be moved out of and allowed somebody else to move into. I think what it's saying is that that's one of the reasons we see a government that is floundering in knowing what to do with the gambling program that they have basically initiated and now a program that wants to just go full steam ahead, and they don't

know really how to pull the reins in.

And because of that program that is going full steam ahead and — I might add — helter-skelter, they have a problem with so many people facing problems with gambling addiction that now they're throwing extra money at it. And I guess in that respect we can say it's fine. We believe it's appropriate that that extra money is thrown at it. But at the same time, is that dealing with the real question?

While the government on one hand raided the White Bear Indian Band and shut down their so-called illegal casino although it's . . . one would question whether it was illegal because the debate is still taking place in the courts.

We see on the other hand, they sit down, they're sitting down with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), and working out agreement with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to prevent casinos from popping up across the province. However they can and will appear on a number of reserves across this province.

I think, Mr. Speaker, as we get into the debate further, we will find that there are many people across this province who have some serious reservations about gambling and about using gambling as a means of deriving revenue. And it's not just in centres like Saskatoon, where they voted overwhelmingly against it. It's not just in centres across rural Saskatchewan, even in my communities, but even many of our native leaders and native people have some very serious and deep concerns with regards to an expanded gambling program.

I think . . . I've been approached by people who have raised the question, and they've raised the question because they've worked very hard to try and control alcohol addiction and drug addiction on their reserves. And they just see this as another avenue that they're going to have to work hard to try and maintain their integrity.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are many things that must be debated as we get into further debate with regards to the gambling issue. It certainly is a contentious issue and, as we've already seen just in the news just prior to and following Christmas, we've seen a number of people that have already been convicted because of gambling addictions. And that's just in a very short period of time. These VLTs (video lottery terminal) haven't been out there very long and already people are finding themselves in a problem and stealing from their employers to support their habit.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is indicative of the problems that we face, and we will certainly have many more questions we would like to raise and will be raising not only with the Premier . . . not only with the minister but with the Premier and his government as well.

Let me end my few comments this afternoon by just pointing out one fact, and that is the Provincial Auditor's observations of the budget. And while the Provincial Auditor gives the Minister of Finance a passing grade for bringing in a balanced budget on the general revenue side of government, the Provincial Auditor has also taken the time to let us know and let the people of

Saskatchewan know that that portion of balancing the books is only 60 per cent of the actual spending and expenditures in the province of Saskatchewan; and that the government wasn't and has never really been truthful with the people of Saskatchewan by not presenting the whole picture. And let me quote:

Withholding CIC dividend gives inaccurate budget picture . . .

By withholding money in the Crown Investment Corp. (CIC) and the liquor board, the government is not giving an accurate picture of the 1994-95 budget, says provincial auditor Wayne Strelieff.

And then he goes on to indicate what the government had budgeted for last year to come out of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), but they decided not to take it. And I guess it's appropriate that that decision was made because of the windfall profits that happened to come into their possession through agriculture and through the resource sector. And now it appears even the unions are helping to balance the books.

While Thursday's budget was "a strong financial plan of the part of government under the general revenue fund" it is . . . not complete (he said) . . .

And that's one of the arguments that we must make and bring forward to this government. It's time we presented the broad picture, the whole picture of expenditures, rather than just spending time on a small, minute portion of expenditures in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there certainly is much more that could be raised, but in view of the time, in view of the fact that there are other members who would like to speak in this debate, I would be pleased to thank you for having given me the opportunity to speak this afternoon, and sit down and let other members have the opportunity now of addressing the budget speech debate. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — It gives me great pleasure to enter this debate in support of the budget presented a few days ago by my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

Balancing a budget, the first in 13 years, is a monumental task, one which requires courage, commitment, and compassion. Our government's four-year balanced budget and debt management plan is realistic, honest, and practical. It's an approach that Saskatchewan people will endorse because that is the approach that they take in regard to their own affairs.

Our plan provides tax relief in measured steps, steps that won't jeopardize the province's fiscal position. It makes debt repayment an integral part of our financial future, and it continues to provide funding for services and programs that benefit all Saskatchewan people and contribute to their quality of life.

Throughout our 90-year history, the people of this beautiful province have always risen to meet great challenges. They are

resilient, self-sufficient, compassionate, and wise. They believe in prudent fiscal management, both in their personal lives and in the operations of their government. They believe that all people deserve a decent quality of life, that fair taxation is a foundation of a society that values social and economic justice, and that governments are the instrument through which all this is achieved. They understand that governments provide programs and services to Saskatchewan people directly through the government bureaucracy or indirectly through third party transfers.

Unlike the Leader of the Liberal Party they know that government is not some faceless, foreign, greedy monster and that expenditure cuts means cuts in services and cuts in transfer payments. They will not quickly accept the opposition's exaggerated political rhetoric on taxation and government. They realize that a fair and responsible taxation regime is a better method for paying for public services than a system of user fees. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is really what the Liberal leader supports when she attacks taxation.

I want to quote an article from the *Calgary Herald* on Friday, an article that was written by Catherine Ford, and I quote:

A . . . system of user fees is the answer to . . . (the tax protester's) dream. That way, they don't have to subsidize anyone. It is a slimy way out of . . . social responsibility that doesn't suit your own particular frame of reference.

For tax protesters like the leader of the Liberals, taxation becomes a convenient rallying cry for people who in their hearts believe in the user fee system, a system which is really a system that rewards the haves and marginalize the have-nots. It is a right-wing agenda that the members opposite have bought into because today they believe it is politically popular to discredit the purpose of government, the role of the public servants, and the benefits of a fair and responsible taxation system.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition are irresponsible, dishonest, and manipulative, and it proves that they will stop at nothing in order to achieve political power. The Liberal leader has no consistent policies on which to build a responsible government and furthermore she has allegiances to no one, not even her Liberal counterparts in Ottawa. That, in my opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not leadership that shows integrity, honesty, and credibility.

Now in regard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the budget in my department, we continue to provide a wide range of services to local governments, public safety, social housing programs, and cultural and recreation agencies. My remarks in this Assembly will not cover all the elements of such support but I do want to focus on a number of programs and services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, revenue sharing is an important part of providing financial support to our more than 800 rural and urban municipalities. Our revenue-sharing transfers to rural municipalities last year allowed them to construct almost a thousand kilometres of rural roads and almost 60 kilometres where we resurfaced.

This year, with the assistance of the \$33.23 million in revenue-sharing grants, there will be even more road work in those municipalities. So far, approximately 248 RMs have applied to construct and service almost 1,460 kilometres of road.

The urban revenue-sharing grants, which amount to \$46.534 million, will continue to provide urban governments with reasonable level of support for their local services and programs.

(1515)

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that during the last three years when the provincial government has been coping with its deficit-fighting plan, we have continued to provide reasonable support to local governments. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the total reduction over the last three years has amounted to \$6.7 million or about 1 per cent of the total budget of 670 million that accounts for all municipal government budgets.

The impact of this \$6.7 million reduction has equalled approximately one to one and a half mills in pressure on the property tax. Our approach to support for municipal governments in this province is dramatically different than the approach used by our neighbours in Alberta — a province that is so often held up as a shining example. There they have eliminated their transfers to municipal governments, and as well they are transferring 100 per cent of the property assessment cost to local government.

In Saskatchewan, revenue-sharing transfers have now been stabilized. But in response to requests from municipalities, we must turn our attention to review and reform. It has been about 20 years since the revenue-sharing program was first introduced. Conditions have changed, objectives have changed, and needs have changed.

We must re-examine the principles on which transfer payments are allocated to municipalities. The following principles should guide us in this discussion. There should be increased emphasis on equalizing the capacity of municipalities to provide services to residents. Equalization would focus on the cost of providing services rather than the cost of maintaining local administrative structures. Funding should continue to be unconditional so as not to distort local service priorities. Financial assistance should be targeted to support the provision of primary municipal services such as police and fire protection, streets and roads, and water and sewer services, and we should encourage intermunicipal cooperation and effective service delivery.

And finally, any new formula should be fair and equitable, predictable, efficient to administer, effective at achieving objectives, and fit with other provincial programs and initiatives. It is our intention to engage in discussions with the urban governments on a new formula that could be implemented by 1996-97.

Another important initiative that is taking on greater significance, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, is the provision of emergency services such as police, fire, ambulance, and

emergency measures. To ensure that in the future there is a coordinated approach to delivery of appropriate services, the provincial government is facilitating a review of existing services that will involve representatives from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, SaskTel, and service providers. The goal is to make improvements to the emergency service delivery system. This review is looking at communication systems, geographic information systems, management coordination, accessibility, responsibility, and affordability.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Saskatchewan our cooperative spirit has helped us overcome challenges before and it is helping us now. Saskatchewan municipalities are participating with their neighbours in ever-increasing numbers. Our research shows that there are literally thousands of intermunicipal agreements in this province. These agreements are a practical and cost-effective approach to providing sustainable services. Our government's intercommunity cooperation program has helped to focus interest in this area by funding new and innovative approaches to shared service delivery.

In 1995-96, the ICC (intercommunity cooperation) program will be extended, with a commitment of a further \$350,000 to be used by municipalities working together to find innovative ways of sharing services and reducing costs; \$50,000 of this program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be dedicated to helping municipalities who want to pursue restructuring options.

There has been a lot of discussion recently about the VLT program. It has been 18 months since the VLTs were introduced at the urging of the hospitality industry and a number of rural communities who argued that too many Saskatchewan people were spending their gaming dollars south of the border or in other provinces where electronic gaming had already been introduced.

From the beginning our government has been determined that this expansion of the gaming industry must be controlled and carefully regulated. We have also been determined to carefully assess the social impacts of gaming and to deal with those impacts in a thoughtful and sensitive way. Recently I had the opportunity to announce another measure that will have a positive impact on all of our communities.

Effective April 1, nine and a half million dollars, or 10 per cent of the government's net VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues, will be designated to local communities. SUMA, SARM, and SAHO will advise us on how best to distribute these funds for the maximum benefit of local people. How it should be allocated and what it should be used for will depend upon the recommendations received from these associations.

I want to make it clear to the members of this Assembly, the commitment we made is to share 10 per cent of the net income each year in perpetuity. The remaining VLT revenues are now shared with communities through programs and services financed by the government's General Revenue Fund. However,

by targeting the remaining 10 per cent of this revenue more directly, we're able to enhance the benefits communities may receive from the VLT programs while still maintaining our goal for a balanced budget. Our objective is to place this money into the hands of local people to serve community needs in more direct and tangible ways.

As I said, we are waiting for the three associations to give us direction on the method for distributing the funds and the purpose for which they should be used. This is a permanent commitment which the Government of Saskatchewan has been able to make because we have been able to make . . . because we have been able to meet all of the targets in our balanced budget plan.

The provincial government is sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The province, in recent years, increased grants to communities to assist them in the provision of transit services to people who are disabled. An estimated \$2.15 million was committed to the operations and capital costs of this service in this fiscal year.

This represents a 15 per cent increase in the \$1.87 million spent in 1992. Communities are eligible for up to 50 per cent of the operating costs and up to 75 per cent of the cost of specifically equipped vehicles. All told, there are 79 communities providing this very necessary services, and it is another example of our government's continuing support for disadvantaged and disabled people living all across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan people value and preserve their heritage; respect, accept, and celebrate their cultural diversity; and promote their expression and excellence through the arts and cultural industries. There have been a number of developments recently that are significant to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, last month I released a discussion paper relating to arts, cultural industries, multiculturalism, and heritage. On a per capita basis, Saskatchewan is still amongst the leaders in providing funding support for the cultural, heritage, and recreation agencies. This year we will be increasing our funding support by \$175,000 to the Western Development Museum so that the museums in Yorkton and North Battleford can continue to operate and capture the tourist dollars that are now becoming an essential part of our economic development strategy.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll be increasing our funding through grants to the libraries in northern Saskatchewan so that communities in the North will have the same opportunities for library services as those communities in the South.

In addition to this support for the library system, we have an application before the infrastructure program to provide regional libraries with new computer technology that will allow them to participate on the information highway. We hope to make an announcement in this regard very shortly.

The film industry in Saskatchewan in 1994 had a \$33 million impact on the economy and created hundreds of jobs. There are 26 film companies producing films today compared to only 19

in 1989.

A few days ago it was my pleasure to announce a further initiative that will accelerate the growth for this new and exciting industry that is emerging rather rapidly in our province. The three-year, \$4 million agreement to which I refer will generate approximately \$40 million in production activities over the next three years and create about 1,200 jobs and \$130 million in economic activity.

The agreement with the Saskatchewan Film and Video Development Corporation will allow the Saskatchewan film and video industry to take advantage of the opportunities in the expanding entertainment and information industries and to provide seed money to attract the private sector investment.

Another example of an added impetus to our economic growth is a recent rare fossil find. I refer here of course to the major scientific discovery of the skeletal remains of the tyrannosaurus rex at Eastend. The rare find has drawn worldwide attention. A temporary facility, an extension of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, has been equipped and staffed to provide a local preparation and research capacity related to the T-Rex as well as other fossil discoveries in the area. This year our government is providing \$180,000 toward this project.

There is however, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately still a need to reduce funding in some areas in order to achieve the goals our department set in the development of the balanced budget plan. In 1992-93 we increased funding to the Saskatchewan Arts Board by \$500,000, providing a total of \$4 million for that fiscal year and for the fiscal year 1993-94.

Last year however, we reduced that funding by \$200,000; and this year, regrettably, we've had to reduce funding by a further \$95,000. Although this is a difficult cut for the Arts Board, the amount that we are providing for arts is still above the 10-year average and larger than the amount when we came into office in 1991. We will work with the Arts Board to find a way of mitigating the impact of these cuts in order that grants to the artistic community, they not be impacted.

This past weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had the great privilege of participating in the opening of the Canada Winter Games in Grande Prairie, Alberta. Young athletes from all across Canada are competing in 21 sports. Team Saskatchewan has a number of excellent athletes and have already won several medals. Our department provides staff and developmental support for our young athletes together with our partners, the Saskatchewan Games Council and Sask Sport.

Mr. Speaker, even in this period of fiscal restraint, we continue to encourage and support young people to participate in multi-type sporting events like the Canada Games and the Western Canada Summer Games. Once again in marked contrast to the Government of Alberta, that has served notice that they do not wish to participate in the 1998 Western Canada Summer Games, thereby denying their young people the opportunity to participate in this western Canada multi-sport event. For people who hold up Alberta once again as a model for us, they should look very closely at the consequences of their actions.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to providing continued support to the arts, cultural, recreation, and sports communities, and to expanding their opportunities within their cultural and economic context of Saskatchewan.

Our government also believes in affordable and accessible services provided by local governments, and it is our commitment to continue to work with them in order to achieve these common goals.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all residents of Saskatchewan a happy 90th anniversary and look forward to participating with them in their celebrations. I will support, with a great deal of enthusiasm, the budget presented by our Minister of Finance and look forward to working with our government on those objectives and goals. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1530)

Mr. Keeping: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pride that I rise and support our budget today on behalf of the Nipawin constituency and the people in it. It is always a privilege to rise in this place, and it is especially enjoyable in this case of this historic event of this budget.

I have a copy of the budget in my hand, Mr. Speaker. And it is good news for the people of the Nipawin constituency. It's good news for the province of Saskatchewan. Balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, brings stability. Balanced budget brings confidence. They bring investment. This balanced budget brings increased spending for health care. This balanced budget brings lower taxes. This is a new day for the province of Saskatchewan, and it's a pleasure to be part of it.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first balanced budget . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Thompson: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a family from Beauval: Rick Laliberte, his wife Val, and their son Kyle. Rick is a member of the Northern Lights School Division and is down in Regina meeting with officials of the Department of Education. And I would just like all members to welcome Rick and his family here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

**MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE
(BUDGET DEBATE
(continued))**

Mr. Keeping: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was about to say, this is the first balanced budget that Saskatchewan has had for over 13 years. And I might also say that it's the first balanced budget we've had since the New Democratic Party was the government last in the province. And the people in my constituency know that fact and appreciate it as well, Mr. Speaker.

I am excited to be part of this. This is one of the reasons that a lot of us put our hat into the ring when we ran in the first place, because of the mismanagement and the deficit financing of the former government.

Mr. Speaker, not only did we announce in this budget a balanced budget in this coming year, but we announced to the province and to all that we had a balanced budget in the year that we're in now. This is good news — two balanced budgets.

And not only in this document did we mention that there were two balanced budgets, but we have set out plans in here to have three more consecutive balanced budgets in the province of Saskatchewan — five consecutive balanced budgets in the province.

We have come from the brink of financial crisis in the province to being the first province in Canada to have a balanced budget. Once again Saskatchewan has shown Canada that no matter how hard and how difficult the task may be, the people of this province are up to the challenge, and we've proved it once more. We're leaders in the Dominion of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in three short years, just over three short years, we have come a long ways and we have done it the Saskatchewan way. We have worked together with communities, with our partners in education and health, local government, with business and with labour, and we have reached a milestone today with this budget.

Our balanced budget plan that we had, had specific goals and targets in it. The plan was based on caring and cooperation and compassion and sharing and all shouldering a burden of the load. And the plan succeeded because of the hard work of the people of the province. Together we did it. We have gone from having a deficit of \$841 million, one of the highest per capita deficits in the Dominion of Canada — perhaps the highest — to the first province to have a sustainable balanced budget.

We have in this document five years of sustainable budgets, balanced budgets. We have travelled from a time of uncertainty and insecurity to a new day of confidence and security. Now is the time to build on that foundation. And the debt management plan that we have in here, to manage the debt of the province, in our balanced budget, includes a strategy to pay down the debt so that our children and our grandchildren will not be saddled with our bills. That we won't be living one style of life in Saskatchewan now and leaving other generations to pay for it, as seemingly was the plan of the former government.

We have in this budget a plan to move towards full employment, an ideal of full employment. It's based on a solid foundation of economic growth and training matched to the need.

We have in this budget a plan to improve the quality of life by improving our health and education program. A strategy that will allow the people of the province of Saskatchewan to now start to reap rewards for the past few years of sacrificing, as they were called on to do and they did so well. Because of the sacrifices made in the past three years, we have earned the freedom to dream dreams for ourselves and dream dreams for our children, Mr. Speaker.

Will this new plan work? It's a good question. People wonder when a government starts out with a plan, will the plan work. I believe it will work. We have proved the credibility of our last four-year plan and this new plan will work. We can build on what we've already accomplished here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Our restored financial health means that we are in a stronger position now to weather uncertainties that may come along. Our plan may have to be modified. There are many dark clouds on the horizon; there are many things we don't know and can't predict with a great deal of accuracy. Because of where we are today, because of the freedom we have achieved, we can say that our plan may have to be modified, but it will be done. It will be done.

The people in my constituency of Nipawin know and understand that a balanced budget, and having a sound, credible financial plan, brings stability. The sound financial management is a precondition of economic growth. Business has always been reluctant to invest in a province that cannot manage its own money.

Saskatchewan's recent fiscal record has restored the confidence in our economy. We have reached the deficit targets that we had for ourselves and we reached them two years ahead of time. We did it by cutting spending, reducing spending in our province and our programs. We did it by creating an economic development, by promoting economic development and the climate to promote economic development, and we did it by raising taxes as well.

Mr. Speaker, we redesigned our oil and gas structure to encourage exploration and production, and it worked. We changed our approach to agriculture to encourage diversification and more value added, and the numbers show that it worked.

We provided targeted tax reductions to business. A lot of people talk about taxes that have been increased, but we specifically and very strategically reduced the tax to small business. Small business provides 80 per cent of the employment in our province, and we knew that. And they responded and created the jobs, and it worked. Our approach is paying the dividends that we hoped for.

Mr. Speaker, this year alone the retail sales in our province increased by 9.4 per cent. That is the best performance we've had since 1982. The best performance we've had since 1982.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have time to comment on all the things that are in this, but now where we are today, we have a sound foundation to build on, that we can build on, and now we're going to make jobs our number one priority. We're going to attack that with the same vigour and the same amount of planning that we did the deficit reduction three years ago.

We're going to make long-term, ideal full employment as our ideal. Everyone that needs a job and wants a job should have one. That's going to be our goal.

Mr. Speaker, another component of our job strategy is further targeted tax reductions. Over the last four years we have reduced the per cent of our corporation income tax by 20 per cent — it used to be 10 and now it's 8. And it has worked. Mr. Speaker, the people back home in the Nipawin constituency, the business people back home, know that this happened. They appreciate it and they responded.

Mr. Speaker, the small-business tax that we have in Saskatchewan now is the second lowest of any province west of Quebec. In this budget we're reducing the taxes on aviation fuel; we're reducing the tax on fuel from 7 cents a litre to 3.5 cents a litre. More tax reductions.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we are going to reduce selectively the corporation tax for manufacturing and processing firms here in the province. The amount of this reduction will depend on the amount of the business of this company's presence in the province.

The more business activity that they have in the province, the more the tax will be reduced. For Saskatchewan-based companies, the corporation tax will be reduced from 17 per cent, where it is now, to as low as 10 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that will make that particular tax the lowest tax west of Quebec.

People back at my constituency know this. They've been looking at the budget and they know it and they appreciate it, and they say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we are also adding to the value of agricultural products in the north-east part of the province. We've got many opportunities up there because of the diversity of our agriculture. And we've got many ways and many different innovative ways that we can add to the value of that. And we are encouraging them with \$18 million in the agri-food innovation fund in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, there are companies up in north-eastern Saskatchewan now that are looking at this and they appreciate it, and they know it, and they're glad we did it.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the things that are in this budget; a few of the things that are good for the province of Saskatchewan. This is the best budget that Saskatchewan has had for probably over 13 years. Mr. Speaker, I'm just so excited about it and glad to be here today and to be part of it.

I'm just going to make a few more words . . . or say a few more words and then I'm going to be seated. I know there's other people that want to comment on this budget as well.

Mr. Speaker, one of the good news is . . . part of the good news that was announced in this budget — and it really was good news — that not only did we balance the budget for 1994-95, but we had \$119 million profit to invest, profit to pay down the debt. We've started a new direction for Saskatchewan of paying down the debt in our province.

We are turning our backs on the problems that have been in Saskatchewan. We are remembering them only as a lesson learned. And we're setting our sights firmly on tomorrow. We are leaving behind the past of deficits and debt and we are looking with enthusiasm for a brighter tomorrow. Together, together, we have earned our freedom. We have learned wisely to use moderation and balance and hard work and good planning.

There is, Mr. Speaker, no doubt there's a new day dawning in Saskatchewan, as is the title of the budget speech. I'm glad to be part of it. I'm proud to support this budget. And I believe this budget is positive and it's sustainable and believable and it's good news for the people of the Nipawin constituency and it's good news for the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it's a pleasure for me to rise today and to state right off the beginning of my remarks, to nobody's surprise I'm sure in the legislature and in Saskatchewan, that I wish to give my full support to the 1995-96 budget as introduced by my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

Before I do so, I want to pay a special word of tribute to the contribution made by my friend and long-time colleague sitting behind the rail, the former minister of Finance in the Blakeney government, the Hon. Mr. Walter Smishek, who is here with us today in the legislature and flatters me, I must say, in saying that he comes because he wants to hear my remarks. I'm not sure that I can quite match the standard that Walter would expect of me, but I'm certainly flattered by his presence in the legislature today.

I have to say that during his tenure as minister of Finance, as was the case throughout the entire period from 1971 to 1982, the Blakeney government of the day operated on a balanced budget or a surplus budget, and it was the kind of good news and prosperity that the people of Saskatchewan became accustomed to prior to the election of the Conservative government from 1982 to 1991. So thanks to Walter for a job well done and thanks for being here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I've been

following this debate with a great deal of interest, as I hope the people in Saskatchewan have been following it with a great deal of interest, because one sort of recurring thought keeps coming back into my thoughts, into my mind, as I listen to the official opposition Conservatives and the pretend official opposition Liberals make their remarks. And it reminds me of an old Rolling Stones' song. Those of you who follow the Rolling Stones will know of this song. There's one lyric in that song that says this: I see a red door and I want to paint it black. I see a red door and I want to paint it black.

In fact the name of the song is, *Painting it Black, Painting it Black*. Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we've heard during the duration of this budget debate by the Liberals and the Conservatives, Conservatives and the Liberals — I see a red door and I want to paint it black. I see some optimism and I want to paint it black. I want to paint the legislature black. I want to paint the legislative buildings black. I want to paint all of the optimism and the hope of Saskatchewan people black.

I want to tell the Liberals and the Conservatives it ain't going to work. It isn't working because the people of the province of Saskatchewan are not going to be so easily fooled by the rhetoric of the Tories and the Liberals, knowing that things are not black. For the first time since the defeat of the Conservatives in 1991 there is a new day dawning and it's filled with hope and opportunity and promise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I want to paint it black, the Conservatives say. And the Liberals rush in and say no, I want to paint it blacker. And then when they get up and make their speech, the Conservatives then get up and say it's impossible for the Liberals to make it blacker; we're going to make it black, blacker, and even more blacker. Dark black, purple black, purple dark black — any kind of monochromatic black colour or combination thereof, the Liberals and the Conservatives will put it all together.

No wonder they're riding so low in popular support, because they know, as the people of Saskatchewan know, that that kind of a line simply has no resonance. How can it have resonance when the new day is dawning; when the people are now beginning to see sunshine coming into Saskatchewan's lives?

There is a new day in Saskatchewan. There is a new day of hope. They see the old way when, I might say to the Conservatives and the Liberals, things could properly be painted as being black. That old day of deficit after deficit after deficit leading to a mountain of debt, that period of black nine years, they see that behind us. They see a future of sustainable balanced budgets and surplus, a new day of hope.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — They see, Mr. Speaker, finally the end. It's not completely over, but at least the beginning of the end of all of those failed megaprojects that the Conservatives embarked upon which caused this deficit and debt.

And I will not recite all of the litany of it except the one that I keep on referring to, is GigaText, which in the book written by Stevie Cameron called *On The Take* she describes as gigamess. I invite the people of Saskatchewan to read that chapter if nothing else of the particular book.

Those failed megaprojects by those fast-buck artists over there now sitting in the official opposition, those would-be barons and tycoons, these people who wheeled and dealt with the taxpayers' money, those black days, they see that at an end. And they now see a new day of hope that our Crown corporations are going to be run on a sound, businesslike, and proper social, economic policy for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. A new day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — A new day of real jobs. A new day of optimism at the farm gate. It's not totally that we're out of the woods there, but a new day of optimism in agriculture. A new day of optimism in investments for training. A new day of optimism for young people. A new day of hope and optimism in health care renewal — health care renewal which if we had gotten along in the good, bad, old, black days from 1982 to 1991, would have seen the destruction of medicare, precisely what the Conservatives and the Liberals have never, ever supported right since 1962 and today still want to see accomplished.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I'll have a word to say about health care in a moment. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have indeed stepped out of the darkness of Conservatives and Liberals and Liberals and Conservatives, and into a new day of opportunity and hope and trust. The first balanced budget of any government anywhere in Canada in over five years. The first balanced budget in this province since 1982, since my friend and colleague Walter Smishek sat with me in the treasury benches, since 1982.

And we did it the Saskatchewan way, Mr. Speaker. We did it the peculiarly distinctive, compassionate, humane and sensible Saskatchewan way by people coming together to rise to the challenge and to defeat the challenge and to now decide to work together for a brighter tomorrow. That is what we have accomplished in this budget '95-96. What a great achievement — what a great achievement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a great achievement by itself, but what I'm speaking to is the methodology: people coming together, tightening their belts. Sure they had to sacrifice. Sure there were some tough decisions that we made. They had to bear the brunt of them. We all bore the brunt of them. We set the goals and the targets, and I hope the people of Saskatchewan will give us credit in due course for that. But they did it in their peculiarly distinctive Saskatchewan style, and they did it in this way too which makes Saskatchewan so unique.

We built our budget by not sacrificing or destroying the core values of what it means to be a Saskatchewanian or what it means to be a good Canadian. We pulled together. And in pulling together, we said we're not going to tackle this deficit and debt in a non-Canadian way, the non-Canadian way being hacking and slashing and destroying government and the services that government provides for people.

After all, what is government? Listening to the Liberals and the Conservatives, they would have us believe that government is some foreign entity out there. It isn't. Government, all of us, is no more, no less, than the people. We are here to serve the people. And the people of this province, the people of this country, want us in hard times, in the politics of the 1990s, the politics of public deficit and debt — that is the challenge — they want us to preserve the quality of life, the core values of good health care and good education and equality of opportunity. They do not want to adopt a policy of hack and slash under some sort of thinly-disguised pseudonym of lean government, lean government which really means no government. That's what it means.

Make no mistake about it. What the Conservatives and the Liberals are talking about is not lean government — no government. And just like they're in contest about who can paint the black bean blacker, they are in contest about who can paint the lean bean the most lean and leaner and leaner and leaner until there is no government.

Make no mistake about it. This budget and this legislature and this province and this country is at a crossroads because the debate is, can we preserve the fundamental, core values of community and compassion and decency and education and health care? Or do we give up and surrender and become Americanized and ruin the country in the process? That's what this debate is about; that is what this budget is about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, it is to be sure that we cannot deny — none of us in government, none of us as legislators can deny — that we are facing all kinds of external pressures which are beyond our control in many circumstances: global economics, global interdependency, global technology, capital moving quickly and rapidly all around the world. We know these are factors that a provincial government may not have much control over, maybe even the national government may not have much control over.

But I tell you this, Mr. Speaker. This is what makes this '95-96 budget so great. I will tell you that so long as we occupy the front benches of this province, of this Government of Saskatchewan, so long as we occupy the responsibility and the trust of government, acknowledging these global pressures, we will work with them but we will never give in to them because we want to build an independent and strong Canada and an independent and strong Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — That's why this debate is so important

to me and why I've been watching it with so much interest. We can argue about the facts and the figures. I think those are, by the way, beyond argument because they're quite clear and independent experts have authorized the figures and validated them, that we have articulated and set out in the House.

But apart from the figures, what this really is, is this core, fundamental debate that I've talked about, about the kind of vision and the kind of future that we really have in store for ourselves and for our children; whether we want to protect those values of good health care and education or whether or not we give up; or whether we will, in short, paint everything black and blacker, lean and leaner, leaner and leaner, and in the process destroy the distinctive, fundamental feature of what it means to be a Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, to be a Canadian, as you know, as every one of us knows, is something much more than simply carrying the title of being Canadian, belonging to a great and peaceable country. That, of course, is something we should be proud of. But we distinguish ourselves from our cousins and our friends to the south of us in the United States because there they have adopted a policy over 200 years ago of relying on individualism. That's their ethic. The great American Revolution was a fight about individualism.

And when they won in the revolution and when they set up the United States Bill of Rights, the Bill of Rights is a document which protects the individual over all. And the document in the United States views government as being something other than a composition of men and women of all colours, races, creeds, languages, who've come together to build something more than individual rights, to build societal rights, community rights.

Justice does not only equate with individual rights, Mr. Speaker. Justice equates with individual rights, but it also equates with other, communitarian rights. Justice equates about whether or not we are a caring and compassionate society.

And so in the United States even to this day, the President of the United States, who's visiting our great country today, has tried to reform such a fundamental, basic, communitarian justice objective as health care, and he seems to have failed. And what they're doing in the United States now, they're resorting to the courts. They're resorting to the individual interpretations of the United States's Bill of Rights in an attempt to get a basic, fundamental freedom as we have in this province and we enjoy, such as health care and medicare.

We didn't build our country that way, Mr. Speaker. We didn't build our province that way. We built our country and our province in the belief that individual liberties and rights are very important, but that side by side there are also community rights which are also important.

And instead of believing in the war of the individuals and the dog-eat-dog approach of the Liberals and the Conservatives, we decided in our province and in our country that we would get together to accomplish by working together that which we could not achieve by working alone.

And look at the great accomplishments. Our medicare system, our social safety net — those are the things which distinguish Canadians from Americans. Those are the things which have made Canadians and Canada number one in the world. And now the Liberals and the Conservatives say, less government; no government. They say destroy that. I say never will the people of Saskatchewan give you the front benches with that philosophy and that approach.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — That is the Rolling Stones' theme, I want to paint everything black. And it's not washing politically, Mr. Speaker, because it is foreign to our ethics, to our culture. It is foreign to what Canadians know what we are.

And everywhere in this province, people are responding. Jobs — no matter what the Liberals try to do, Statistics Canada, the federal Liberal government agency, jobs up over 7,000 since 1992. I could go on. January 1995, even the surge continuing into the 1995 year.

I want to tell you about jobs, Mr. Speaker, by giving you one concrete example. Yesterday it was my pleasure to be in Contact Lake, about an hour's drive north of La Ronge. First time I'd ever been there. And here I see, following the Saskatchewan ethic that I've talked about, a model of cooperation and job creation.

Here we have private industry. Here we have aboriginal groups. Here we have environmental groups. Here we have government organizations and agencies working through such programs as the multi-training program, working through the northern development fund. My colleague, the Hon. Associate Minister of Economic Development was there, as was the Associate Minister of Education there, and we saw all of these people of all colours and all backgrounds coming together, to do what? To officially open the largest gold-mine in Saskatchewan in a provincial park. Cooperation.

And you know, anywhere outside a hundred yards of the site location, anywhere on the lake and on the trail, you could never tell that there was a gold operation there or a milling operation. It has been designed and built in that way to be sustainable, to protect the environment, and to be economically sustainable. And when that particular production ceases, it has been designed so that the area can be rehabilitated right back to its natural habitat. And there is an example of cooperation and jobs.

And you know, I thought to myself, Mr. Speaker, yesterday — and I've been thinking about this overnight and today — I always talked about the gold of Saskatchewan being wheat. And it is the gold of Saskatchewan; it's still the engine of our economic development.

Who would have ever thought that we'd see the day that because of the bounty that we've been provided for by the good Lord, that we can say that gold is wheat, but gold is gold?

And gold in northern Saskatchewan provides opportunities for aboriginal people, gets them off social assistance because they can contribute and they work so hard, and there's a redistribution of wealth and opportunity.

And where else but in Saskatchewan through the policies of the Minister of Economic Development, the *Partnership for Renewal*, and the taxation policies of the Minister of Finance, can we see this cooperation translate into a tangible gold operation?

Gold means gold. Gold means wheat. It means jobs and it means more jobs in the future. JobStart, Future Skills, opportunities galore.

Retail sales therefore are up. Potash values are up. Manufactured products and shipments are up. Oil and natural gas revenue is up. Agriculture is even up. They're not out of the woods — agriculture. Everything is up in the province of Saskatchewan.

Oh, there they are — the doom and gloom people are at it again, trying to paint it black. I didn't think they had any paint left yet to paint black. There they are.

All of this is up and this is because the painting of the black of the Liberals and the Conservatives simply is not going to apply. Mr. Speaker, we're not out of the woods, thanks to the big-spend, big-buck artists of the Conservatives and the Liberals. We're not out of the woods yet. We've got a huge debt. We're not out of the woods. But here's an example at Contact Lake, Mr. Speaker, where people in a Saskatchewan way have pulled together to cooperate, to protect core values.

And the member from Shaunavon, the member from Shaunavon representing the Liberal Party would dismantle all of that because he wants less government; would dismantle that because he wants no government; would follow the lead of his federal Liberal counterparts who will have bought into the Conservative agenda for less government, meaning no government. I say shame on him and the Liberals and the Conservatives. Shame on them for turning your back on the Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it is a fundamental debate about what kind of society we want to build and what Canada and Saskatchewan is. A fundamental debate. And I'm glad the conservative Liberals, Liberals, Conservatives have joined us in this, because we're building for the 21st century in another way as well. I want to give two examples.

The 21st century, just five years away, that's all. It is said that knowledge-based industries are going to be the jobs of tomorrow. The traditional plans, the traditional industries, we've got to work on them and to maintain them; there's no doubt about that. But we've got to start planning for this. And we have two things that we're talking about. This budget supports it, by the way, with the taxation plans by the Minister of Finance.

She'll address that, I'm sure, in her wrap-up remarks.

One is ag biotechnology. Thirty per cent of all of Canada's ag biotech is located right here in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan — 30 per cent of all of Canada's ag biotech. You know that 200 million more dollars in annual sales by the year 2000 is the prediction that these people in this area say will be the outcome of ag biotechnology.

Here's a home-grown industry which ties in with agriculture and what farmers can do and how this means more value added and more worth for their products right here. Ag biotech. That is a 21st century. These people are going to vote against this.

An Hon. Member: — Who did that?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Who did it? The member from Morse says, who did it? The member from Morse can't even pronounce it, let alone defend the policy of ag biotechnology.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And the member from Shaunavon of course, this member, when he sat on this side, professed the words of support to this policy until he found some phoney reason to jump over to the Liberal Party and take with him \$190,000 of taxpayers' bucks. Shame on that kind of an approach. That's what they do, Liberals and Conservatives together.

He says, who defended it? The member from Morse, biotechnology. It's a joke. What the member from Morse and the member from Thunder Creek did when they were in the front benches, they had GigaText. That was their idea of ag biotechnology.

Give us a few more examples. Supercart. There's another good example of what you did on ag biotechnology. How about Joytec? There's another good example of ag biotechnology. How about . . .

An Hon. Member: — High R Doors.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — High R Doors. There's another good example of ag biotechnology.

How incredible of the official opposition parties, those Conservatives and Liberals together. How dare they say in 1995 they're for it. I know, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan know that what they say is unbelievable. But that's what we're doing, we're moving ahead in ag biotechnology.

Another example, Mr. Speaker, the information technology. This I want to say a word about as well. We have a number of companies at the information technology, an industry of the 21st century. Here the member from Thunder Creek is also going to take credit for it.

We have as a consequence of the information world of tomorrow, a leading edge industry developing. And what's

important here is that the barriers which have been serious barriers of geography are being lessened and being reduced by virtue of the information highway, Mr. Speaker. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They have been reduced, and this has been always a difficulty. But I wish that the hon. member from Thunder Creek, if he would take part in this debate, would actually stand up on his feet and make a contribution, rather than chirping from his seat in this regard.

The information society, Mr. Speaker, this is another example of what we're going to do and how we're building tomorrow for the 21st century. The key here is universal access. The key is being sure that our young people are trained to do these two jobs in these two areas of biotechnology and information for tomorrow's economy, while all the while protecting and guaranteeing that our traditional economic activity develops and continues to develop in the right way.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm saying here is this. The philosophy behind this budget is a philosophy of Saskatchewan people working together to pull us out of crisis, which they've done. The philosophy is of Saskatchewan people working together to having pulled us out of crisis, building for tomorrow, which they're doing.

The philosophy of this budget is to be of optimism and of truth. It is to put behind the black paint of the Conservatives and Liberals and to now rally to start providing jobs, which is the truth statistically as shown. We are building, and the philosophy behind this budget is to preserve and to maintain the fundamental core values of Saskatchewan and Canadian people. That is the difference between us and those two old-line parties.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about core values. I want to come back to that theme for a moment. I mean to me nothing exemplifies core values than the quality of life programs that I've identified — health care and education. I want to return to this theme.

This is the key debate — this is the key debate. Will we as Canadians have the wisdom and the courage to protect that which makes us distinctively and uniquely Canadian? I've alluded to that a moment or two ago. Do we have the courage and do we have the wisdom and the foresight to build our programs and our budgets and our legislation to do that? Or are we going to succumb to the so-called external pressures of Americanization and globalization and technology? That's the key issue.

Are we going to give up? Are we going to become Americans or pale imitations of Americans? And I think no bigger litmus test there to answer this question than on social programs, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell you without any equivocation that on this side, this New Democratic Party government on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, says yes, we have the wisdom and the courage and the foresight and the philosophy to make sure that Canadian values remain the same and are going to be relevant into the 21st century, unlike the black-paint artists that are sitting opposite us.

Let me give you an example. We're doing it right now . . . two examples. Health care. Conservatives and Liberals oppose it;

they absolutely oppose it. They oppose it because they opposed medicare in 1962. The KOD (Keep our Doctors committee) — the Liberals and the Conservatives led the Keep Our Doctors committee. In 1962, where were you? You were out there with the KOD. Where were you? You were out there with the KOD. You were out there knocking on the doors.

The Liberal premier, Ross Thatcher, was kicking on the door opposing medicare. Nothing has changed. Nothing has changed. A few different faces of some people that are around there, but the same old bosses that control them, the large, big corporations and the same old anachronistic 19th century philosophy is still there. The Americanization is still there.

And no wonder they're opposed to our health renewal. What's behind our health renewal, Mr. Speaker? Very simply this. What's behind our health renewal is this — the philosophy that health care is more than bricks and mortar and hospitals, more than pills and more than fancy, expensive technology. Oh yes, we need them when we need them, but good health care for the length of our lives depends as much — I would say even more, on such things as income and jobs and education and good environmental practices.

The Canadian institute on child poverty says that a child born by accident of birth into a home of poverty is more likely to die in infancy more times than those born in middle and upper middle income, be sick during the years of growing up, and die at an earlier age than the rest of us. Is that the kind of health care system we want to perpetuate? That's what the Liberals want; that's what the Conservatives want.

In fact not only do they want to perpetuate it, they want to even dismantle what we have by going into two-tier health care. That's what the Conservatives and the Liberals are talking about.

So what we're saying in our health care is, let's shift the philosophy, Mr. Speaker -- shift it, not destroy it. We need hospitals; we need the pills; we need the technology; we need our doctors; but let's shift it now to prevention, to wellness. Let's make sure that there is education. Let's seek to eliminate poverty. Let's seek to provide education. Let's make sure that discrimination is eliminated. Let's protect the environment. Let's say there is a role to this.

Let's say that we're going to give our assistance to senior citizens. Let's keep them out of institutions longer as possible so that they can lead more productive, healthier, happier lives, not in institutions but in their communities, contributing to the communities. That's the philosophy of our health care program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — But from day one those Liberals, Conservatives, those dinosaurs of the 21st century, have opposed it from day one. Initially the Leader of the Liberal Party got up in the 1991 election — oh, I fully well remember this during the leaders' debate in 1991; there, the member from Saltcoats has got the transcript — she got up and she said, close down the rural hospitals. That's what she said. Then she turned around and inside the legislature she now is opposed to this.

Then at one point she got up and she said, well you've got to elect the hospital boards; now she says you do not have to elect the hospital boards. All over the map, a typical Liberal.

Then the Conservative approach is the same position. I think the hon. member from Shaunavon made the wrong move . . . no he didn't make the wrong move. I was going to say he should have gone to the Conservatives. No, no, no, no. No, no, no. He didn't make the wrong move in leaving us; we're happy and he's happy. He made the wrong move because you shouldn't have gone to the Liberals, you should have gone to the Conservatives who want to destroy medicare. They want to destroy it, because they have consistently opposed all of it.

Oh, that Assiniboia-Gravelbourg by-election of which we've talked so much about.

An Hon. Member: — Five hospitals.

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — That's right, five hospitals, the W5. Who did it? They did it. The Conservatives did it. They set up those hospitals and all of those hospital beds, and all the articles that have been printed about it and all the W5, this was their idea of health care. And now all of a sudden they get up and they say, why don't you let in the cataract clinics for two-tiered hospital care?

Well I tell you, Mr. Speaker, you can hack and slash like other provinces have done. You can argue two-tier. You can flip-flop, flop-flip all over the place. You can be a Liberal/Conservative. You can do all of that. But I tell you one thing: if you do it, you cannot save health care. The worst thing you can do is be neglectful of it. The worst thing that you can do is not have the plain, old-fashioned — I'll use this word — guts to save it for the 21st century.

And if you do not have that wisdom and the courage to be compassionate about health care, the defining line between us and them, you will see the destruction of health care. That's exactly what they want to do in Alberta. That's exactly what the Liberals and the Conservatives want to do in Saskatchewan. And by golly, so long as we're around, that will never happen in Saskatchewan — never happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I'll give you one other example, Mr. Speaker, in the non-health care area. Take a look at the children's action plan. Take a look at the domestic violence Act that my friend and colleague, the former minister of Justice, brought in. Take a look at the plan for prevention, and support of families, resource centres, stay-in-school programs, health initiatives, parenting skills, healing conferences — one could go on and on — all defined and set out in this budget, are the core, key values.

Government which adjusts to the politics of the '90s — public debt is the politics of the 1990s — but draws the plan in a way that we can afford to pay the core programs as best as we can

afford to pay for them. Not a party that simply says well, the politics of public debt means less government, which means no government. Throw it right out — throw it right out.

Not the politics of Newt Gingrich in Canada; one being Newt and the other being Gingrich. One being like Tweedledee and one being like Tweedledum. It doesn't matter which of the two spokespersons are of which of the two parties, Newt or Gingrich, Gingrich or Newt. I tell you that mean-spirited, destructive, man-hunt politics of the Liberals and the Conservatives, that destruction of Saskatchewan and core values, will never be accepted by the people of this province. That's why you're going to be defeated and massively defeated when the next election is called — when the next election is called.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Let me say about the Liberals for a moment, let me talk a word about the Liberals for a moment. Let me just say a word about the Liberals, about the storm clouds that I see about the fundamental heart and soul and mind, the debate we're talking about, Canada here. You know on Monday the federal Liberals are going to have a budget and I'll be looking forward to seeing what the hon . . . the member from Shaunavon has to say about that and agriculture. Oh he had lots of worries about our GRIP programs and we'll see what he has to say Monday night on that.

This is a government elected to do away with the GST (goods and services tax). We'll see what they have to say about that on Monday. We'll see whether the new politics of the Liberals and the Liberal leader and the member from Shaunavon is based on principle or money from the Liberal federal operation.

As Tommy Douglas used to say, when they say it's principle and not money, it's money 100 per cent of the way. That's what the Liberals will be. That's if they're elected. You know what you're going to see, Mr. Speaker? You're going to see to see more taxes and more cuts to social programs.

And this is what I want to talk about. One area specifically bothers me, which is a fundamental philosophy, the difference between them and us. Take the proposal on post-secondary education. They want to eliminate it to the extent of \$100 million for Saskatchewan, to our purse right here. You know what that means? That if you go to university, you're going to have to have manyfold, sometimes ten times fold, tuition fees to get into university. Just as my colleague, the Deputy Premier says, for the rich.

This is an insidious policy, because what it says is, it's pay as you go — pay as you go. It says to the young men and women, the young students, the future leaders of our society, the future business people, those who will be generating the wealth, it says this to them: you got to pay as you go, as you go to university.

And you know, member from Thunder Creek, if that student is forced to do that and if we allow that plan to succeed, it just might happen that when that student reaches the workforce and

starts paying taxes, he or she might say to the senior, well you know what it is: I had to pay as I went; you, Mr. or Mrs. Senior, you pay as you go; and you on social assistance, you pay as you go. That is what the Liberal philosophy is here behind this — intergenerational transfers of responsibility.

Communitarian community values, the theme of my speech, that is what Canada is all about. What they want to say to the young people is, accept an ethic which is foreign to Canada.

I'll give you another example they're talking about — I hope they don't do it. The Liberals are talking about, saying, you know we're going to just simply dump all of the social programs onto the laps of the provincial governments — not going to give you enough money to keep up the standard. You just got it, that's what they're going to say.

And then they're going to say to the richer provinces: if you can afford the higher standards of social programs, good luck; but for the poorer provinces who cannot afford the standards of social assistance, too bad, tough luck.

There is how you build a Canada. You build a Canada on intergenerational competition, you build a Canada on regional competition, you build a Canada on individual competition, and you destroy a Canada which has been built on competition but compassion and cooperation.

And I tell you, that is where the storm clouds are there right now facing this particular Canadian people and population on Monday night. That is what the Liberals are talking about and that is what is being mooted. That is Canadian. Those are black clouds. Now there is a proper time to bring out the black paint. That is something that everybody should be worried about. That will destroy Canada. I've said that to CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio in an interview. The interviewer said to me: do you mean, Mr. Premier, you really mean destroy? And I said, yes, it will. I mean it won't destroy the country overnight, but it will gradually, over the long while, redefine the country.

He says, what about GRIP? The member from Morse says, what about GRIP? I'll tell you what about GRIP. We said about GRIP that it was the shortest-lived so-called long-term program for farm security ever. And it was. We said to the member from Morse and we said to everybody in the province of Saskatchewan about GRIP that it wasn't market sensitive. It's funny me saying this; you should be talking about market sensitivity.

We said that if you did away with GRIP, what you would do is you'd have more innovation by farmers. And you know what? The federal Liberal government and our government agreed on doing away with GRIP and we signed a new, whole-farm income plan. And you know what? I didn't hear one voice of dissent from the member from Shaunavon who left us supposedly on GRIP. Not one. Not one.

There is the stand of the principles. There are the stand of the principles of these two old-line people. I have to laugh about the principles. They tell us: you know, you elect us and we have

a principled stand on gaming — Liberals on gaming, a principle standing. Well you know, I have to say a word about this.

I have to say a word about integrity in politics and gaming. You know they say there should be integrity in politics. Who would disagree with that? There has to be integrity in politics. We all try to be. Liberals try to be, Conservatives try to be, we try to be; we all try to have integrity. But integrity, you know, is many faceted. It is individual integrity and it's also integrity in positions.

I talked about the position on gaming. Now here is one where I'm going to compliment the official opposition. They have a policy which is integrity. It's not a right policy in my mind, but at least a correct one. They say no to gaming, no to casinos, let's have a referendum on it; that's what you say. And you've got that; that's integrity. I don't agree with it.

Here's what the Liberals do: 1992, July 3, the Leader of the Liberal Party said, first nation casinos — listen to the words, quote — first nation casinos would threaten provincial revenues as well as race-tracks, bingos, exhibition casinos, and video poker. End quote.

Two months later Roy Bird of the FSIN publicly criticized the Leader of the Liberal Party. So in June of 1993 she gets up in the legislature and she says, quote, on VLTs: the province has probably foregone 50 to \$60 million in revenue because you haven't set up VLTs. Flop and flip.

Then when the VLT position got all the hoteliers and many of the local communities riled up, she wrote a letter in March of 1994 to the hoteliers and she says basically, we support the VLTs. Then two months later she flops again and says to the communities, well hold it; what we can do is we can give more to the hoteliers, more to the communities, and balance the budget by reducing the revenues of the province without raising taxes and without slashing back in programs. Well you know, if anybody believes that, I've got a couple of bridges that you could buy from me in the city of Saskatoon.

Then she said, there's got to be a moratorium on casino development. Quote: we don't need a referendum on this issue, she said last November. Well I think the truth finally came out when a former Liberal staffer is quoted as saying just a few weeks ago, quote: on the Liberal gaming issue we're not committed firmly to any position. I say that is the case . . . (inaudible) . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Talk of integrity. Talk of integrity. And then you see, there's something in the hundreds . . . The new politics of integrity, hundreds of millions of dollars promised in new spending programs by the Liberal leader, but no tax increases of course. And no VLT . . . well the VLTs, we don't know where she stands on VLTs. More spending, fewer taxes, a balanced budget. Mr. Speaker, voodoo economics, voodoo economics.

You know the Roman poet, Ovid, I'm going to quote him,

summed up . . . She summed up her philosophy very simply. She said this, quote: everyone's a millionaire where promises are concerned.

You, Mr. Member from Shaunavon, must be a multi-millionaire. Must be a talk of integrity; \$15 billion debt and then talk about integrity. The complaints about patronage. One of the federal Liberals . . . don't follow what the Liberals say, it's what they do.

Senator Pietro Rizzuto says, after they won power federally, quote, about Liberals: I'll try to find them jobs, whether in private enterprise or in the civil service, end quote. Then the Leader of the Liberal Party — I love this one — in Saskatchewan, the *Regional Optimist*, April 17, 1994, headline:

Haverstock: NDP put power before people.

(Here's the quotation) . . . However, she said that doesn't mean she wouldn't make partisan appointments if she were premier.

"That's doesn't mean that Liberals won't get jobs," she said. "They're competent . . ."

Integrity and new-style politics, Mr. Speaker. It is a joke.

Mr. Speaker, my time has run out. I want to close by saying why this is a fundamental debate. To me this is a fundamental debate, a fundamental debate as you can see, about the values of Saskatchewan and Canada. Values and approaches which the Saskatchewan people rejected in 1991 under the label of PCs (Progressive Conservative) and they'll reject it under the label of PCs in 1991 or under the label of Liberals in 1995 or 1996. They're common; they're the same.

Both parties, on labour, say no to minimum wage, no to workers' compensation, no to labour standards, no to trade union Acts.

In fact the Leader of the Liberal Party talked about occupational health and safety. Mr. Speaker, I have this quote: what are these yahoos (referring to us) doing dealing with legislation that is completely irrelevant. Unquote.

Now she can call me a yahoo. Occupational health and safety — irrelevant? Well I guess if you're a Ph.D (Doctor of Philosophy) doctor psychologist in a fancy paid job at some university, then it's irrelevant. I guess it's irrelevant. I guess it is irrelevant. If you're riding around in some limousine donated by a senator, then it is irrelevant. Let them eat cake; that's the philosophy.

Well I tell you, here's where they're the same. Liberals and Conservatives, Conservatives and Liberals — elect them, and they'll undo all of the labour legislation. They'll undo all of the social programs of the province of Saskatchewan and foist on Canada something which will no longer be Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, it's not going to work. It's not going to work. Mr. Speaker, it is not going to work. Talk about your pension and

talk about your pension and talk about what you want to do about pensions, which is to Americanize politics the same way. You don't want working men and women or farmers in there. You just want your big, multinational people in there. And you talk about your pensions any time, Mr. Speaker. You talk about all the boys in power from 1982 to 1991 and what they did with the public purse and where their money's at. We'll have lots of time to talk about public funds as the months unfold, about the Conservatives and the Liberals — lots of time to talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the members of the House, this is a budget of progress. This is a budget of hope. This is the dawning of a new day. This is the saving of Saskatchewan and Canada. This is a budget for the future. And please, I say to Saskatchewan, reject the black-paint artists, the doom and gloomers. Join with us in building a brand-new future for Saskatchewan and Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1630)

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to close debate on this budget, the first balanced budget in this province in more than a decade.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I should add, however, this is going to be a difficult act to follow.

I want to first thank the constituents of Saskatoon Westmount. It is a privilege to represent them in this legislature, and I'm most grateful for their continued advice and support.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the people of Saskatchewan. As I've travelled around the province, people have come out to meetings. They phoned into open-line programs. They've written letters to the editor. And they've stopped me on the street to give me advice. Many have actually taken the time to call or write to me with their reaction to this budget. In their letters they talk about how relieved they are that our financial crisis is behind us, how pleased they are that this government lived up to its commitments, and how proud they are that Saskatchewan was the first province in all of Canada to balance its books.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Last but not least, I want to thank my caucus colleagues. Our budgets have been team efforts. We work together to chart our course. We made a pact when we became government that we would live up to the promise that we made to our children and our grandchildren. We all had a stake in this commitment, and we all worked hard to ensure that our word was kept.

Mr. Speaker, this caucus has never wavered in its commitment to the fiscal agenda. This is the finest caucus in all of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — It's easy in our present fiscal situation sometimes to forget how far we've come in three short years. It's easy to forget that we were on the brink of a financial crisis in this province. It's easy to forget when I became Minister of Finance in 1993 this province couldn't even borrow money in Canada.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you this: this caucus will never forget those days. The long nights, the hard choices, the need to turn our face to the wind and say, this is what we have to do if we care about the future of this province. We laid out a plan to turn this province around fiscally and economically.

Today we see the results of that plan: sustainable balanced budgets, an economy whose growth is among the highest in all of Canada, and a province which is a special place to live. A province where we have not only secured our financial future, but we've also maintained a high quality of life.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Now that the goals of our first plan have been achieved, it's time in this budget to lay before the people of this province our second plan.

What does our new financial plan mean to the average person in Saskatchewan? It means that jobs can now be our number one priority, so that we can do everything in our power to ensure that our children have the opportunities to launch their careers in this province. It means parents can feel secure in the knowledge that they will have a quality education system there for their children. It means people, especially seniors, will know that a better health care system will be there for them when they need it. It means that we can begin to reduce the mortgage on Saskatchewan by paying down the debt. And it means that we can do all of these things and still begin to reduce taxes for the average family.

Mr. Speaker, our plan builds on the solid foundations laid in the first plan. Stimulating economic growth to enhance revenues was part of our strategy to balance the books. That's why we restructured our oil and gas royalty rates. That's why we changed our agricultural programs to promote diversification and value added production. That's why we provided targeted tax cuts to business.

And our strategy is paying dividends. No matter how much the opposition dislikes the statistics, they can't escape them. Over a billion dollars has been invested in our oil and gas industry. Our retail sales in 1994 were the highest since 1982. And 12,000 more people were working this January than last.

In this budget we're building on that very solid foundation by using every lever at the disposal of our government to promote economic growth and create jobs. By building on our agricultural strength; by promoting biotechnology research and value added processing; by continuing to provide targeted tax reductions to business; by working with others in the

community. By investing in social and economic infrastructure and by investing in new programs to help our youth land that all-important first job in Saskatchewan. And by ensuring that our people have the training they need to fill the jobs that are being created by this economic recovery.

So the first prong of our new plan is jobs. The second prong is enhancing our quality of life by enriching the quality of health and education. Improvements to student loans and a new distance education initiative will help to ensure that students from all backgrounds and regions have equal access to quality education.

In health care we're moving to the second stage of our reform of medicare by increasing our support for home- and community-based services. What we're creating in this province is a people-centred health system, which places less emphasis on administration and institutions and more on services for people, which gives people more control over their health by emphasizing prevention, which provides health care as close as possible to people's homes, and is controlled by local people. Our goal is to sustain balanced budgets, but also to sustain our high quality of life.

The third prong of our plan is to begin to reduce taxes for Saskatchewan families. When we brought out our balanced budget plan, we made a commitment to the people of this province that as our financial situation improved we would begin to reduce taxes. We are living up to that commitment. Every taxpayer contributed to eliminating the deficit; every taxpayer will share in the benefits. That's why we're providing an annual reduction in the deficit surtax of up to \$150 per year per individual, or \$300 for a two-income family. This tax cut is affordable and sustainable.

As I went around this province, people told me again and again they do not want to return to the 1980s where dramatic tax cuts led to higher deficits and higher taxes; where governments drastically cut taxes today, only to raise them tomorrow.

Our tax cuts are different. They're affordable and they're here to stay. People deserve that sort of stability, security, and honesty from their government.

The fourth prong of our plan is to begin to pay down the province's debt. We've already begun that process. In 1994-95, not only did we balance the budget, we achieved \$119 million surplus. This surplus, along with reductions in Crown corporation debts and restructuring of megaprojects, allowed us to reduce the province's debt by over \$500 million this year.

This achievement needs to be put into perspective. A surplus of \$119 million is equivalent to Ontario having a surplus of \$1.2 billion or Canada having a surplus of \$3.6 billion. By 1999 we will have reduced the debt of the province by \$1.2 billion. This level of debt repayment is equivalent to Ontario reducing its debt by \$5.5 billion or Canada reducing its debt by \$16.6 billion.

Our debt management plan also allocates future surpluses — one-third to pay down the debt, one-third to reduce taxes, one

third to enhance our quality of life. To ensure that we sustain our financial health, we've already opened the books of the province, so the people of the province can know the true state of their finances. In this session, we will build on that solid foundation by passing balanced budget legislation.

This, then, Mr. Speaker, is our new plan for the province's future, our plan to take Saskatchewan into the 21st century. Mr. Speaker, we've had to be open, honest, and accountable to Saskatchewan people. The same should be expected of our opposition. They too have to be held to account for their positions.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about credibility. This session is about credibility. It is about who has the credibility to lead this province into the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — You know where we stand. Where does our opposition stand? We have laid before the people of Saskatchewan two plans for their future: the balanced budget plan whose goals have been achieved; and our new four-year plan for the future. The opposition has carped and whined and niggled and nattered about our plans. But have either of them come close to proposing an alternative? Have either of them had the integrity to say, we don't agree with the government's plan, so here's ours. No, they haven't.

The Tories would make Saskatchewan into Ralph Klein's Alberta. Although I must say that I haven't heard a lot about Ralph Klein's Alberta lately from the opposition benches. Maybe it's because the Premier who went around lecturing people about balancing the books and not raising taxes met his day of reckoning — his own budget. He did not balance the books and he did pick taxpayers' pockets by increasing health care premiums and taking million dollars in new fees.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people will never accept Ralph Klein's agenda. They will never accept the inequity of making parents pay to send their children to kindergarten. They will never accept a two-tiered health care system where your access depends on your ability to pay. They will never believe that the decent way to treat poor people is to give them a one-way bus ticket out of the province. This government is committed to living within its means but we're also committed to maintaining our high quality of life.

But at least I have to say this about the Tories. There is a strain of consistency in their approach — cut taxes, cut programs. The same unfortunately cannot be said of the Liberals. Their approach is flavour-of-the-month finances, blowing in whichever direction the wind is going that day. Mr. Speaker, this type of approach is not credible.

Last session of the legislature the Liberals were the big spenders. They accused the government of being deficit-driven, uncaring. And they criticized us for not spending more money. They wanted more money for infrastructure; they wanted more money for agriculture; they wanted more money for crop insurance; they wanted more money for provincial court judges.

And the list goes on.

(1645)

In the last session of the legislature the Liberals added \$300 million to the deficit. So last session the Liberal flavour was big spending. This session we have a new flavour of Liberal — the born-again conservative Liberal, the cost-cutting Liberals. The Liberal leader is now going to cut government spending. So far her major contribution to this debate has been at the very philosophical level of talking about the number of people working in one office in Saskatchewan relative to the number of people working in another office in Alberta, a very high level debate.

Never mind the fact that the duties of departments in offices vary dramatically from province to province. Never mind some real comparisons, real comparisons like the fact that while Saskatchewan spends less than \$900,000 a year on intergovernmental affairs, Alberta spends more than \$5 million a year on intergovernmental affairs. None of this matters. The Liberal leader's main contribution to the debate about high finances has been to talk about the number of people in this office relative to the number of people in that office.

Mr. Speaker, before getting into the real numbers on government spending, let's establish some context about the Liberals and their use of statistics. They're either totally confused about numbers or they've been manipulating them. To be charitable, I'll say it's confusion. One day the Liberals say there are no new jobs in Saskatchewan and they use Statistics Canada to back them up. Then Statistics Canada comes and says there's thousands of new jobs in Saskatchewan. What do the Liberals do then? Well they switch to Revenue Canada. When Revenue Canada doesn't work, then they switch to income tax; never mind that it's the federal government that determines income tax projections.

Who knows where they're going next. The Liberals are either manipulative or confused. Either they're manipulating numbers to suit their purposes or they simply don't understand finances and numbers. The misuse of numbers about government spending is especially disturbing to me when they're talking about cutting the costs of government because they're simply not levelling with the Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, this government has already acted to dramatically cut the cost of government. The numbers are there in black and white, and the Liberals know those numbers. They know that we cut spending by \$275 million. And the number would even be higher if we took into account all the offloading that we've had to absorb in the last three years. Financial experts praise this government for curtailing spending. For instance, recently the chairman of the Toronto Dominion Bank said there's two provinces that have done an excellent job at curtailing spending: Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Finally, all of the statistics show that Saskatchewan is already lean. For instance, in Alberta, even after the last round of cuts, the per capita cost of providing services and programs in Alberta is still higher than in Saskatchewan. So we all know

we've already got a tight ship. We run an efficient public service. The facts bear this out. These are the facts.

So if the Liberal leader is talking about further reductions in the cost of government, what she means is drastic cuts in services for people, cuts in health, cuts in education. And she's got to level with the Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan people do not want flavour-of-the-month finances, a leader who adds \$300 million to the deficit one session and talks about cutting government the next. These are challenging and changing times. Governments have to be able to navigate in very choppy waters. People don't want a ship that is not charting a consistent course, a ship that blows in the wind, a ship that is buffeted by the waves. People want a ship that is charting a clear course; people want a ship with a rudder.

Mr. Speaker, what Saskatchewan people want most from their politicians is honesty and sincerity. In the last week many . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. According to rule 14(3) it is at this time that the Speaker must put the question to the main motion.

The division bells rang from 4:50 p.m. until 4:54 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Romanow	Van Mulligen	Thompson
Wiens	MacKinnon	Tchorzewski
Lingenfelter	Shillington	Johnson
Atkinson	Kowalsky	Calvert
Cunningham	Carson	Mitchell
Penner	Upshall	Hagel
Bradley	Lorje	Pringle
Lautermilch	Crofford	Renaud
Murray	Hamilton	Trew
Serby	Whitmore	Sonntag
Flavel	Roy	Cline
Stanger	Kluz	Knezacek
Harper	Keeping	Jess
Carlson	Langford	

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Nays

Boyd	Devine	Swenson
Neudorf	Martens	Goohsen
D'Autremont	Toth	Britton
Haverstock	McPherson	

— 11

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, we won't get into any detailed business today but we'll tomorrow be working on Bills as well as calling estimates for Economic Development.

February 23, 1995

And with that I would move the committee rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.