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| Saskatchewan | 18e | 1e | Discours sur la santé (en assemblée) | 20 mars 1975 | Walter Smishek | Minister of Health | Saskatchewan New Democratic Party |

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance on his Budget of fulfillment. This fourth Budget of our Government, as my colleague so aptly pointed out marks the fulfillment of the commitment we made to the people of Saskatchewan in the New Deal for People during the course of the 1971 election campaign.

The current Budget and those presented in the three previous years document the systematic way in which our Government has gone about fulfilling the commitments we made to the people of Saskatchewan.

New Democrats take pride in their election programs. We regard them as firm commitments, not mere political gimmicks as the Liberals do - something to be thrown away into the garbage can once elected.

Mr. Speaker, the current Liberal financial critic and Leader of the Opposition followed the footsteps of his predecessors, his eyes fixed firmly on the past and his brain turned off to the progress and circumstances of today.

During the presentation of the Budget by the Honourable Minister of Finance last Friday, I watched with care the behaviour and facial expressions of the Members Opposite. Mr. Speaker, first they tried to heckle, then they tried to laugh, then they slouched in their chairs, then their chins dropped and then their faces turned pale, almost green as each new program was announced.

Then they called for an adding machine, Mr. Speaker, to tally up the tax reductions and tax cuts and add up the new programs that were being announced. Mr. Speaker, one of them just about fell off his chair into the wastepaper basket as they realized that their small group of 13 would be reduced to even lesser numbers after the next election, except for the Leader of the Opposition, who every once in a while exploded in a nervous giggle or laugh, as he saw his chances improving for a seat in that other place in Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, finally the Leader of the Opposition got to his feet to deliver his rebuttal and the hundreds of people who came to listen to the Budget got up and left. And there he stood gasping to say something useful as comment. But it just didn't come. Mr. Speaker, afterwards he met the Press and how did he describe the Budget? Let me quote, "Nothing of consequence for anyone!"

Mr. Speaker, I am sure he was living in the past, back to the last Budget of Friday, February 26th, 1971, that he presented. His Budget which had nothing of consequence for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have with me the Steuart Budget which was presented to this House in 1971 and the estimates that he presented.

And let me compare the budget for agriculture for example, of 1971 to the 1975 Budget, Mr. Speaker. You know, in 1971 the gross budget, ordinary and capital expenditure including the federal reimbursements, that's the gross budget, amounted to $16.8 million. Mr. Speaker, look at the 1975 agriculture budget, almost $60 million, close to a 400 per cent increase. $11.5 million for programs under FarmStart, designed mainly to help young farmers to get established in farming. $12.7 million in grants for the farm cost reduction of fuel, that is rebating farmers with seven cents per gallon on farm fuel, .an average of $170 per farmer. $2.8 million in grants for Sas£atchewan Crop Insurance, almost double what was provided last year. $1 million for agricultural stabilization, another new program announced. You know these four programs alone, Mr. Speaker, totalled to the amount of $28 million, programs that were not in effect in the years of the Liberals.

And the Leader of the Opposition says, "Nothing of consequence for anyone!" You know, if he tries to tell that to the farmers there's no question they will laugh at him. They know the value of these programs. They know the value of crop insurance, of FarmStart and of seven cents per gallon rebate on farm fuel.

Mr. Speaker, I looked at the 1971 Budget for Education, including university operating costs. In that year the Liberals proposed to spend $140.3 million in total. Why, Mr. Speaker, this Budget will provide $140.2 million in operating grants for school boards alone, over $26 million more than last year, designed to keep the mill rates down and allow extra funds for school boards and to establish new programs and to provide for salary increases. Over $4.6 million in Saskatchewan student grants or student aid programs, over 300 per cent more than was provided in the last Liberal budget which was less than $1.5 million. $10.25 million of gasoline taxes have been allocated to automobile insurance to keep car insurance premiums down to reasonable costs.

I compared the 1971 Liberal budget for health and I looked at our budget at the present time. Mr. Speaker, a curious thing I discovered. You know, Mr. Speaker, this year we will be spending almost $9.5 million more on the hospital services plan alone than the " Liberals proposed to spend on the total public health programs, excluding the Mental Retardation program which has been transferred to Core Services and now under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Services. And further, under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, there are no deterrent fees to pay, no premiums to pay, no wage guidelines for the hospital employees and nurses to fight, no major deficits for the hospital boards to face. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the budget for the Department of Health has been increased by $124 million when you include the services provided under Social Services for the mentally retarded.

And the Leader of the Opposition says, "Nothing of consequence".

Well, the hospital employees' wages which have gone up by more than 100 per cent in the last four years, is that nothing of consequence? Chiropractic services ensured; a hearing aid plan established; a children's dental care plan has been launched; double the number of chronic care beds, mainly for the elderly; ten health and social centres opened; small hospital closures stopped. Mr. Speaker, some $100 million worth of hospital construction has been approved or is in various stages of development, and more new health programs at various stages of implementation; a drug plan on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, whom are health services for? They're for the people they are the beneficiaries. Mr. Speaker, I'll have more to say on health services a little later.

Now let's take a look at housing. In the last term of office, the Liberals budgeted for a measly three-quarters of a million dollars for housing. This Budget provides for $11.25 million worth of a housing program, a 15-fold increase.

This Budget provides a 24 per cent increase in the highway, bridge and public improvement construction over that provided last year, almost $30 million more than was provided in the last Liberal budget.

In this Budget we propose to provide over $40 million in Property Improvement Grants, that is almost four times as much as was provided by the Liberals, all designed to help reduce property taxes.

For the Leader of the Opposition to say that there is nothing of consequence in this Budget, is an insult to the intelligence of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the Honourable Members to compare the budget and programs of the Department of Social Services of today with the budget of 1971, the last, last budget of the Leader of the Opposition. 1975 Budget, $1.6 million for employment support programs, nothing in 1971. Look at allowances for day care, $1.7 million in the current Budget. What was provided for by the Liberals, Mr. Speaker? It was a mere pittance, a mere pittance of $65,000. This year we are providing over $8 million for residents of special care homes, almost a 50 per cent increase over last year. Do you know what the Liberals provided, Mr. Speaker? Not a single penny for this kind of support for the senior citizens.

But to hear them talk now, they would try to make you believe that all of a sudden they have developed a concern for the senior citizens. Mr. Speaker, as my colleague says, "death bed repentance" because the record of the Liberal Party in the field of health and in the field of provision of services for the senior citizens is indeed a dismal record, a record for which the Liberals have no credibility at all.

There is $24 million for the Family Income Plan, a plan that is the envy of all low-income people of Canada. You know watching the television news last Monday evening, I noted that the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare says that this is the type of a plan that is essential to lift the poor from the welfare and to create incentives for them to seek employment.

And now we are moving with an income supplement plan for the senior citizens.

These are just a few comparisons between the last Liberal Budget in 1971 and our Budget of 1975. No wonder, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was gasping and grasping and reaching in every direction in an effort to finding something to attack this Budget with. But he failed, as did his predecessor.

Mr. Speaker, for the first two years of this Legislature we had Mr. Ken McLeod as the Budget critic. But, Mr. Speaker, as I look about he's not here any more. Ken is gone. Then we had Cliff McIsaac as the Opposition critic last year and after one year he gave up. He is gone too, Mr. Speaker, and now, this year we have the Honourable Dave Steuart, Leader of the Opposition as the Budget critic. One wonders if he, too, will soon be departing from our midst. Perhaps to join some of his former colleagues in Ottawa's resting place for the unsuccessful Liberal political leaders. I would have to say that Saskatchewan's gain would be Ottawa's loss, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have now briefly described what this Budget means to the people of Saskatchewan, as I compared it to the last Liberal budget.

Let us look at what this Budget does for the citizens of Regina. Naturally many of these items will also apply to the other cities and towns of our province. But what does this mean to the citizens of our Queen City?

First, I want to remind the people of Regina of a $15 per capita community capital fund, this means $2.2 million for the current year. Over a five-year period, this program will provide $11 million into the city of Regina. It will help to keep the mill rates down to a reasonable rate.

Second, unconditional grants at $10 per capita this year will mean a further $1.45 million for Regina. Just in these two programs alone our Government is assisting the citizens of Regina with $3.65 million in the current fiscal year.

But there is more, much more for the citizens of Regina. Property Improvement Grants have been increased from $160 this year to $200. Compare that to the Liberal Homeowner Grants of $70, Mr. Speaker, three times what the Liberals provided in 1971. Again, I find it difficult to believe that the people of Regina will consider these grants as something of 'no con~ sequence'.

Library grants have been increased from $43,000 in 1971 to $190,000 in the current fiscal year.

Our public health grants to the cities have increased from $1.50 per capita to $1.75 per capita in this Budget. In 1971, under the Liberal Government, per capita grants were only $1.25. Our 1975/76 per capita grants of $1.75 represents a 40 per cent increase over the Liberal Government figures.

Police grants for Regina in 1971 were $145,000. In the current Budget we are proposing over $1 million, Mr. Speaker, nearly ten times that provided by the Liberals.

Significant funds will be provided for the regeneration of both the Regina General and Pasqua hospitals.

Significant increases in school grants for both the separate and public school systems have also been approved. Again, a comparison with the grants in the last Liberal Budget in 1971 shows increases of more than 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker. In 1971 the Liberal Government budgeted for $3.5 million for the separate schools and $5~7 million for the public school system. In the current Budget our Government, in contrast, has approved a grant of $7.1 million for the separate system and $11.5 million for the public school system. This is more than double what was provided for by the Liberals, Mr. Speaker.

The Department of Highways is spending $1.7 million on the Ring Road and a further $800,000 on the rail line relocation. Housing programs under the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation will see a further $2.8 million to expand and upgrade housing in Regina.

Planning is being started on a new provincial office complex located in downtown which will make a major contribution to the revitalization of the downtown core. Also a new government building is being planned for the area immediately south of the Health Building. We hope to tender this building in the current fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, both these projects will mean a significant economic contribution to the construction and service industries in Regina.

The Government has committed itself to capital grants for a new high school for Regina North East. It is now up to the Public and Separate School Boards to come to an agreement on what they are prepared to do for this needed facility.

Mr. Speaker, in the last budget, our Government approved $1 million for the Western Canada Summer Games. This will help build an olympic track, olympic size swimming pool and a marina for the aquatic events.

We have also approved a further $350,000 for change room facilities in Douglas Park. These facilities will add significantly to the facilities for Regina athletics and for those who enjoy recreational sports.

Does the Leader of the Opposition really believe that this is 'nothing of consequence in this Budget?

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Leader's criticism of the Budget is only matched in cynicism by his comments on the Saskatchewan Prescription Drug Plan. The Honorable Member's pleas for immediate action made me think that he has lost either his memory or his sense of shamefulness completely. It was his Party and his Government which procrastinated for seven long years over a drug plan.

Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition thinks that the people of Saskatchewan have forgotten his Party's promise of a drug plan in the 1964 election campaign. During their three years in Government after 1964, they did nothing about introducing a drug plan that they promised in 1964.

Since the Liberals fooled the people once, they decided to try again in the 1967 campaign. In 1967 they promised that they would hold a referendum on a drug plan. Did they bring in a drug plan, Mr. Speaker? Did they even hold a referendum? No, Mr. Speaker, they did what Liberal Governments are so capable of doing, of doing nothing.

In 1971 we promised that we would implement a plan to greatly reduce the cost of prescription drugs for the citizens of Saskatchewan - a plan that would be based on a drug formulary and bulk purchasing. We then decided to go beyond that pledge, Mr. Speaker. We appointed an expert committee to develop a drug formulary. This committee will continue to work to update and extend the formulary. We have entered into distribution contracts with existing wholesalers. We have been involved in extensive negotiations with the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association. These negotiations were successful with the negotiating team named by the druggists. However, the members did not support the agreement by their own negotiating team and then approved by their executive council. As I have indicated publicly and in this House, the fact is the druggists rejected some of the main features of the plan to which their own representatives had previously agreed.

I should like to remind this House that in the fall of 1973 the pharmacists met with us and presented us with their recommendations as to the main features of a provincial drug plan that they wanted to see established. Among those recommendations was one that said that the beneficiary should make a contribution towards the cost of each prescription Mr. Speaker, as you know, the pharmacists have now said that they want to remove any charge to the consumer even though they previously suggested this should be included in a provincial plan.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that partial financial participation by the consumer is a feature which has been supported initially by the pharmacists, is being supported by the doctors and by the nurses as well. This was also recommended by the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Medical Care known as the Thompson Committee and also recommended by the Federal Royal Commission on Health Services for Canada, chaired by Chief Justice Hall.

Mr. Speaker, the pharmacists have asked for a limit of a 30-day supply on drugs. We don't understand this new requirement which would limit pharmacists and doctors to exercise their professional judgment on the amount of drugs to be supplied to a client through a single prescription. Thirdly, the pharmacists want more money - $3 per prescription instead of the sliding scale negotiated from $2.65 to $2 depending on volume of prescription sales. We think the negotiated dispensing fee was fair, perhaps even generous, Mr. Speaker.

In British Columbia they can charge up to a maximum of $2.55 per prescription; in Alberta up to a maximum of $2.65; in Manitoba up to a maximum of $2.25; in Ontario up to a maximum of $2.60 and in Quebec a flat rate of $2.15. But here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because we are trying to introduce a universal plan they are insisting on a flat $3 fee, much higher than in any other province.

We suggested a sliding fee in order to give extra financial support to the small rural pharmacists. This sliding fee scale would not over reward the large volume outlets in the cities and which are in many cases owned by chain companies and department stores. The final point of difference involves the term of the contract.

Mr. Speaker, if the Government agreed to the additional request by the pharmacists, the cost to the public purse would be in excess of $13 million per year. I want to emphasize that under the plan that had been negotiated, the maximum consumer prescription charge would not have exceeded $2 per prescription.

Mr. Speaker, we are back in negotiations again with the pharmacists and we shall continue to negotiate as fairly and as responsibly as possible. We will certainly not be stampeded into hasty action by the unsolicited advice from the Party opposite.

Mr. Speaker, following Liberal advice in how to bring in a drug plan would be like following a prescription for disaster. The people of Saskatchewan trust the NDP with health programs. They know that we will introduce a comprehensive drug plan. They know that we are not responsible for the delay and I know that the . . . that we will set up for the prescription drug plan, the model that we will establish will be followed eventually by other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, our Party's concern for the senior citizens of Saskatchewan illustrates most strikingly the difference between NDP and Liberal philosophy. The NDP want to help senior citizens to be as independent as possible contributing their talents to make our country strong. We want our senior citizens to be happy and have a fulfilling life. We are not prepared to use senior citizens as political footballs like the Liberals do.

During those seven lean and hungry years of Liberal rule in Saskatchewan, what did the Liberal Government do for senior citizens? The answer is brief and clear. The Liberals imposed deterrent fees. They closed their hospitals; they did not provide help to the senior citizens, they did not even express a concern for the plight of thousands of our Saskatchewan senior citizens.

By comparison, what is the record of our NDP Government over the past four years? And, what does this Budget do for the senior citizens - a Budget which the Leader of the Opposition characterizes as containing 'Nothing of Consequence."

Mr. Speaker, as a first move and a first gesture in a major effort for the senior citizens we removed the deterrent fees within a matter of days after taking office. We then abolished the medical and hospital premium for the senior citizens. We introduced the Hearing Aid Plan to drastically reduce the price of hearing aids, a program of particular benefit to the senior citizens.

It is true we have had some difficulties with the plan; it is true we have had some administrative problems, but, Mr.Speaker, this is a program that is now being examined by every other province in Canada to be copied by every other province in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we introduced financial subsidies for people in Level II and Level III nursing homes. A large sum of additional money is provided in this Budget to increase their benefits. My colleague the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Taylor) has given the details of this program yesterday in the House. Level III subsidies increased from $7 to $10.50 per day and Level II subsidies increased to $3.50.

We virtually doubled the number of extended care beds in Saskatchewan. We introduced the Senior Citizens Home Repair Program. We extended reduced fares on Saskatchewan transportation buses for senior citizens. We increased the amount of government money for low-cost senior citizens' housing, which is most welcome and appreciated by the senior citizens. I could list many more actions which our NDP Government has taken to assist our senior citizens. In this current Budget, we have the beginnings of a senior citizens' program which we feel is a dramatic move forward, Mr. Speaker.

We are introducing supplements of $20 per month for single individuals and $36 per month for married couples, who are receiving full GAS and GIS benefits. Not a large supplement, mr. Speaker, .but a good beginning. We have established a senior citizens' council and will be creating a senior citizens' branch with the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, we are launching a chiropody (foot care) program in the Department of Public Health - a program of particular benefit to senior citizens. The foot-care program will be staffed by salaried chiropodists of the Department of Health, at a cost for the first year estimated at $100,000. Home care will be expanded by increasing the number of home care programs operating in the province and increasing the services available for these programs. We will increase the sum allocated to current home care programs from $916,000 last year to almost $1.6 million this year. That represents almost twice as much money for home care to what was provided last year. We will be setting up a demonstration project in occupational therapy with a budget of $68,000.

Two teams of two occupational therapists each will work in a variety of settings to determine the rehabilitation potential of occupational therapy in home and community settings. I also want to announce the beginning of another new health program, Mr. Speaker, for senior citizens. The beginning of a special geriatric program - $85,000 is provided for the employment of a geriatrician and provision of a special bursary program to assist physicians to specialize in diseases of the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Robbins) said in his address, senior citizens will also benefit from an expansion of the respiratory disease unit at the University Hospital, Saskatoon. I am told that 14~ per cent of hospital and medical care costs are attributed to respiratory conditions primarily affecting the senior citizen. The need for specialization is self-evident. This special unit will include 11 new positions and other resources, at a total cost in excess of $170,000.

You can add to these programs like the Saskatchewan Hearing Aid Plan and the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living program, both of which are of particular significance for senior citizens.

I recently announced the beginning of phase I of the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living Plan which will cost just under three quarters of a million dollars this year. SAIL will provide needed artificial limbs, braces, wheelchairs, walkers, commodes and similar aids, at no cost to the handicapped. Phase I, which began on March 1st, involves the pro vision of prosthetics and orthotics, that is the replacement of a missing body part with an appliance such as an artificial arm, leg or hand, called the Prosthetics, and devices such as leg or back braces called the Orthotics.

Phase II of the SAIL plan will be introduced in the near future. This will involve the provision of equipment such as wheelchairs, lifts, commodes, walkers and other aids designed to make daily living easier for the handicapped. These devices will be provided on a loan basis for as long as they are required by clients. There will be no charges to the handicapped for any of these aids or services.

Mr. Speaker, in 1971 we pledged that we would provide a program which would reduce the cost of these devices. We went beyond this pledge, we are providing them at no cost to the handicapped, another first in Canada.

In addition we are providing funds to enable municipal governments to improve transportation for the handicapped. $543,000 has been budgeted for this item.

The Senior Citizens Home Repair Program, which was expanded by more than 50 per cent, to $4.6 million this year, is assisting senior citizens in making their own homes more adaptable for independent living. These programs have done a great deal to enable our citizens to remain in their homes and to remain as independent as possible for as long a period as possible.

Mr. Speaker, when you combine the existing and new health programs designed to help the elderly and those that will be introduced such as the drug plan, when you add up the new, existing and improved senior citizens' programs developed and administered by the Department of Social Services, coupled with the senior citizens' house repair program, I am confident that our pioneers are better off living in Saskatchewan than in any other province in Canada.

In total our programs give our senior citizens more security in every way.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has come out with a promise to guarantee senior citizens $350 per month for single persons and $500 per month for married couples. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Liberals have bothered to work out how much that promise would cost; I have been told that preliminary estimates suggest that it would cost at least $80 million a year. This reminds me of the 80,000 new jobs promised by the Liberals in 1964. They didn't put much more thought into that promise today than they did in 1964. This Liberal promise for senior citizens, Mr. Speaker, will end up in the same category as the 80,000 jobs that they promised to the workers.

Since this Legislature opened we have heard a number of comments from the other side of the House about the delays in opening the Plains Health Centre. Mr. Speaker, let me try to set the record straight.

Perhaps the Opposition has not been sufficiently awake to realize that the Plains Health Centre is open and is operating. Some 77 beds are currently in operation and I am advised by the administration of the hospital that within the next few days more beds will be open increasing to 100 beds.

The Opposition Members like to talk about delays in getting this facility into operation. Mr. Speaker, let me tell this House a little story pertaining to the Plains Health Centre, history that they so conveniently forget. Mr. Speaker, The South Saskatchewan Hospital Centre Act was introduced by the Hon. Premier in 1964, when he was the Minister of Health. The legislation was passed during that session. That same year the Liberal Government took office. During the 1964 election campaign the Liberals promised the people of Regina and Saskatchewan that if they were elected they would proceed to build a new hospital in Regina. They said they would take immediate action. The NDP Regina candidates also campaigned on the pledge to build a new hospital.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the Liberal immediate action. It took them until 1967, three years, to proclaim The South Saskatchewan Act, an Act which was passed in 1964. Finally they appointed the first board and then they procrastinated for another year while the so-called hospital planning committee examined the question of allocation of services between existing hospitals and the proposed new hospital. The record will show that in April of 1965 the then Minister of Health, now the Leader of the Opposition, stated in this Legislature that construction would start within two years, with completion within three years. That would have meant completion in 1970.

When the South Saskatchewan Hospital Centre Board presented its initial planning report to the Department the projected completion date was then changed to November of 1971. Then in December of 1968 the board revised its completion date to August of 1972. The reasons for the delay primarily related to problems in allocation of services and as well as consideration of an automated material handling system in a new hospital.

Mr. Speaker, line drawings for the hospitals were finally submitted to the Department for approval in July of 1969. Remember that the Minister of Health, in 1965, stated that construction would start in 1967. The construction timetable was then changed to indicate a December, 1972 completion. Construction finally commenced in August of 1970. Remember that the Leader of the Opposition said that by 1970 the hospital would be open. What happened? That was when they just began construction. That makes almost six years of Liberal bungling and delaying, Mr. Speaker.

When I became Minister of Health, I found that the problems of bed allocation and services between the Regina hospitals was still to be settled. The two former Liberal health Ministers laboured for four years and produced nothing and resolved nothing.

Mr. Speaker, we appointed Dr. Clarkson to work with the Regina hospital boards and the medical community - he worked with all the interested parties and finally an acceptable solution with all concerned parties has worked out. It didn't take us years, Mr. Speaker, it did take several months.

The architect who was appointed by the previous administration went bankrupt - this certainly did not do anything to expedite the construction. We had to find a new architect in mid-stream. The construction project was certified as completed in May of 1973.

But the final checks demonstrated that some 260 flaws such as minor electrical and mechanical deficiencies. These took time to correct. Just at that time the construction industry was in dispute.

Since the Liberal administration did not, or could not come to grips with the allocation of services . . . of the equipment could not be ordered, thus a further delay, Mr. Speaker. It is these problems - the failure or inability of the Liberals to make decisions which have caused the serious delays in getting the hospital into complete operation. It should be recognized that this is not just another hospital, Mr. Speaker, it is a teaching hospital, affiliated with the College of Medicine in Saskatoon. The College experienced problems in recruiting some of the permanent department heads. Also at present the nursing shortage is causing some difficulties in adding further beds. Mr. Speaker, I should add as well that it is the intention of the board to phase in the remainder of the beds in the Plains Health Centre as the two boards rationalize the number of beds in the other two hospitals, the Regina General and the Pasqua.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals tell us that they don't believe in planners and in planning and that is true, Mr. Speaker. When I became Minister of Health, among the other things that I found out that while they started construction on the Plains Health Centre and just a few days before the election was called, they started the initial construction of the Wascana Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences, immediately east of the hospital. We found to our amazement that they provided a roadway of 28 feet, a roadway of 28 feet, which, if the third phase of the wascana Institute would be built, it would mean that within a period of a half an hour in the mornings, there would be 1,400 vehicles going to the hospital and to the Institute on a 28 foot roadway, Mr. Speaker. It is true that the Liberals don't believe in planning. One of the things that we had to do immediately was to acquire land to provide enough of a roadway to be able to take the traffic. This, Mr. Speaker, certainly didn't add to expediting use of the hospital.

While the Liberals perhaps had in mind a hospital, they didn't want anybody to go into it and that is why they didn't provide for an adequate road to the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, let me say a few words about the hospitals and especially the Regina General and Pasqua hospitals. Some weeks ago, I announced a major regeneration of these two health facilities. We appointed Dr. Graham Clarkson to come up with a program design, in consultation with the administrations of both hospitals, that would have the overall objective of completely modernizing both the old hospitals and integrating their services with those of the Plains Health Centre.

When we talk about regeneration, we mean major rebuilding to bring these facilities to the most modern and current standards possible. It will mean an expenditure of millions of dollars. But, we are determined to provide the best possible health ~ facilities to the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan services that are co-ordinated and integrated. Provision has already been made in the current Budget of $1 million in the much needed renovations to the Pasqua Hospital and I hope that those renovations can be started at the earliest possible date, those are the directions given to the South Saskatchewan Hospital Centre Board.

The job of renovating and adding to the University Hospital in Saskatoon is proceeding and we have allocated a further $2.5 million for that project in the current fiscal year - tenders on that project are to be called any day now - this project is expected to cost in excess of $20 million.

These allocations are part of our continuing efforts to keep our major hospital facilities up-to-date and capable of delivering the kind of .quality care that our citizens have become used to. Mr. Speaker, I only regret that the previous government did not see fit to devote the same amount of concern and funding in keeping these major facilities up-to-date. Perhaps if the Leader of the Opposition had been as concerned about the Regina General and Pasqua Hospitals - as he would have us now believe - a great many of the improvements might have been made in the era where costs were considerably less.

While we are committed to spend large sums of money on rebuilding and regenerating our hospitals in Regina and Saskatoon, we are not ignoring the smaller communities. Major renovation expenditures have been approved for Yorkton, Kamsack, Swift Current, further renovations for Moose Jaw are being considered. New hospital construction is well on the way in North Battleford, Biggar and Lestock. New hospitals have been approved for Elrose, Climax and Lampman and many others are being renovated and improved.

Mr. Speaker, when you called it 5:30, I was discussing the question of our provision of funds for the redevelopment of hospitals and new health facilities.

While we have been providing funds for new and better hospitals and expanding our health services generally, we have not forgotten the employees who deliver health services on a daily basis. There were few areas of Liberal mismanagement which were more glaring than their handling of wages and their wage guidelines for hospital employees. Just compare the hospital employee's wages at the present time to those of the Liberal years.

Mr. Speaker, dietary, laundry and housekeeping aides ranged from a low of $213 a month to a maximum of $295 a month in June of 1971. They now receive from a low of $520 to $558 for this same class of employees, an increase of almost 145 per cent at the bottom of the wage ranges. Nurses aides who were earning as little as $242 to $330 a month, are now ranging from $536 to $575 per month. Certified nursing assistants who were getting $330 a month to a high of $405 per month, now are in the range of $653 as a minimum to $711 per month. Orderlies who were at $370 a month to a high of $430 a month, now get a minimum or $700 to $764 per month. Registered nurses were earning a minimum of $500 to a maximum of $570 per month, now, Mr. Speaker, the lowest wage for a nurse is $798, going up to $927 a month.

There are few areas where the Liberal record is as bad as their treatment of low-paid hospital workers. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to compare the Liberal record from 1964-1971 with the record of this Government in its first four years of office.

Mr. Speaker, once again we have increased our budgetary allocations for programs to deal with alcoholism and alcohol abuse. Last year, you will recall, we lunched the AWARE program with a budget of $520,000. That budget has been increased by over 40 per cent for the coming year to enable the program to carryon the good work that has been done. Recognition has come to the program from a number of sources. The Manitoba Alcoholism Commission has purchased some of the AWARE ads and commercials for their own use. I also understand that the Ontario Government has expressed interest in the material in that program. I have no doubt that as other jurisdictions see the generally positive reaction we have had to the AWARE program they will also show an interest in the materials we are producing. I am advised that a telephone survey of .some 800 families is being undertaken to evaluate the response to the AWARE program. I am also told that the advisory committee which we had appointed from a cross-section of a community of Saskatchewan is considering an analysis of base-line data on attitudes toward alcohol and alcoholism. I expect to hear from the committee in the near future with its recommendations and its comments on the data being provided to them.

We have also increased the budget for the Alcoholism Commission of Saskatchewan to just under $1.9 million. That is close to four times the amount the former Liberal Government spent on the work of the Commission. The Commission is developing a community service program which provides for a regional coordinator for each one of the ten health regions in the province. This will enable the Commission to reach greater numbers of people within communities outside the main population centres.

Last year the total amount budgeted for education, treatment and rehabilitation programs related to alcohol abuse and alcoholism totalled $3.2 million, Mr. Speaker. This year our Government will be spending approximately $4.3 million for alcohol related programs. Included is $600,000 in hospital care provided for patients diagnosed as suffering from alcoholism. In addition, several thousands of dollars will be spent by the Medical Care Insurance Commission for physicians' services. I think it is safe to estimate that the cost will be, or the money allocated will be closer to $4.5 million. Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to announce that we have budgeted almost $120,000 for an alcoholism detoxification unit in the city of Moose Jaw. This is one more step to carry the program to all parts of the province.

We are also working with the Indian and Metis people towards new and better treatment, rehabilitation, counseling and alcohol education programs for the native population of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention four items related to the operation of our psychiatric Services Branch. The first item concerns three projected relocations of facilities. The Munroe Wing, here in Regina, and the McNeil Clinic in Saskatoon and the establishment of a new psychiatric facility in Weyburn.

The McNeil Clinic in Saskatoon has been housed for many years in rather small and inadequate facilities. The growth in services rendered through the clinic has grown significantly and new premises are needed. I am happy to announce that we have obtained a lease on much larger facilities - the Sisters of Zion residence in Saskatoon. This building will be renovated and I am told the clinic will be moved into the new premises in early summer.

In Regina for some time now, the physical conditions of the Munroe Wing have been a matter of concern to many of us. I am sure they were a matter of concern to the former Minister of Health. Deficiencies were identified in the structure as far back as 1967 while a number of these deficiencies were remedied by various small renovation projects, it has been evident for some time that alternative accommodations were required. Discussions have been held with the Board of the Regina General Hospital and an agreement has been reached whereby two units of the Regina General Hospital will be reassigned to serve as a 44-bed inpatient psychiatric unit. That is an increase from the present 30 beds. We anticipate that units will be functional as a psychiatric ward early next month, Mr. Speaker.

A few weeks ago I was in Saskatoon to officially open the new Applied Research Unit for Psychiatric Services Research facilities. As you may know, we already have what is regarded as the most advanced Biochemical Psychiatric Research Unit in North America. The addition of an applied research unit will broaden the base of our psychiatric research effort. This unit will give us the capacity to thoroughly research the future course of our psychiatric program and enable us to evaluate more completely the present program and make appropriate changes where necessary. I expect the unit to be able to give us some good insights into the cost effectiveness of community versus inpatient care costs.

Mr. Speaker, much more can be said about new and improved Saskatchewan health programs. When a province becomes recognized by noted authorities from one end of the country to the other, and many others, as again regaining the leadership in the health field - there is a feeling of satisfaction and pride. Hardly a day passes when we don't have out-of-province and out of-country visitors coming to examine and to learn about our health plans, and to see this laboratory of success and experiment being put into action.

Mr. Speaker, the dental program for children is the health success story of the year. There is just no doubt in my mind that this plan will be copied by other provinces. As has already been stated, next year children ages 5, 6 and 7 will be covered.

The $250,000 neonatal intensive care unit or referral centre at the University Hospital at Saskatoon is a major step forward for high risk new born infants and their mothers and is designed to reduce the infant mortality rate.

The new medical bursary program is beginning to produce positive results. It is expected that out of 50 some medical students who will graduate from our College of Medicine this year, 30 or 33 will remain in Saskatchewan. Over 60 per cent, a major break-through, Mr. Speaker. All of us should be proud of this positive result.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal financial critic says there is nothing of consequence for anyone. Even the most cursory glance at the Budget reveals that there is a great deal for the people of Saskatchewan in this Budget. Even the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix which is not noted for its support for the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, writes a complimentary editorial on March 19 calling the Budget - Mr. Robbins' New Deal. I invite the Members opposite to read that editorial and to have an outside group help open their eyes to see that they, too, concur with what this Budget is trying to do.

This Budget has a significant number of direct and indirect tax reductions as has been previously stated. Let me give you just g few examples. Remember each of these items represents taxes that would have been collected from the ordinary taxes of this province, in some cases in the form of higher mill rates had these measures not been introduced. These represent annual savings of millions of dollars. Let me point out in conclusion, income tax reduction of $27 million; abolition of deterrent fees, $7.5 million; abolition of hospital and medical premiums $18.5 million; proper improvement grants $40 million; grants for police services $3.2 million; equalization grants almost $2 million; community capital fund $9.4 million; unconditional operating grants to local governments $6.2 million; grants to LIDs $~6 million; gas tax rebate and reductions $35 million; taxes on meals and reading materials $1 million; raising the exemptions on succession duties $1.7 million. These represent a per capita saving, Mr. Speaker, of over $195 for every man, woman and child in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, some $179 million in direct and indirect tax reductions to the people of Saskatchewan. It is not quite the same thing as simply reducing the tax rate to what it was in 1964. No matter how the leader of the Opposition tries to cover up the facts, Mr.Speaker, I support this Budget because it represents another step in the orderly development of this province. This Budget, like the other three that preceded it are of major consequence, of major benefit to the people of Saskatchewan, a Budget of fulfilling our New Deal for People. Mr. Speaker, the Opposition may find nothing of consequence in this Budget but I say to you that the people of Saskatchewan will find in this Budget the seeds of prosperity and they will show their support of it when the next election is called.

Mr. Speaker, I will support the Budget and I will oppose the amendment.