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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Saskatchewan | 17e | 3e | Discours sur la santé (en assemblée) | 13 février 1973 | Walter Smishek | Minister of Health | Saskatchewan New Democratic Party |

Mr. Speaker, may I, at the outset, extend a welcome to a visitor from the Province of Quebec. I understand that Hon. William Tetley, the Minister of Financial Institutions, Companies and Co-operatives, is in the gallery visiting our province and particularly taking a look at the Department of Co-operatives in the Province of Saskatchewan. I extend to him a warm welcome and express the hope that his visit with our officials and his visit to the Legislature has been an educational and a productive one.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset of my remarks I should like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Biggar, first on his appointment to the Cabinet as Minister of Finance (Mr. Cowley). I want also to congratulate him on the quality of the Budget address he presented last Friday and in the manner in which he delivered the Budget address. To those who may not be aware, the Hon. Minister of Finance is the youngest Member of the Executive Council, he is the youngest Minister of Finance in the Dominion of Canada. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding he is the youngest man to have ever been appointed to Cabinet in the Province of Saskatchewan.

More important than his youth, Mr. Speaker, is his ability. His ability to understand and grapple with the social, economic and the financial complexities of our province. My congratulations also go to the people of Biggar constituency on the quality of men they have over the years returned to this Legislature.

For 27 years, the Biggar constituency was so ably represented by one of Canada's outstanding citizens, the late Woodrow S. Lloyd social, economic and political country, I know that our young years ahead, make an important people.

Just as Mr. Lloyd left an indelible mark on the life of this province and this Minister of Finance will, in the imprint on our province.

Let me also congratulate him on the introduction this year of the gross budgeting system, a system which I have supported and advocated since I was first elected to this Legislature. Introducing the gross budgeting system means that another of our election promises has been fulfilled. We said that an NDP Government will 'simplify government budgeting to show the public as clearly and honestly as possible the true picture regarding revenues and expenditures from all sources'.

Unfortunately, because of legislative restrictions under the Hospitalization and Medical Care Insurance Acts it was not possible this year to show the $15 million in medical and hospital premiums as part of the budgetary cash flow, nor are the premiums, revenues, which are assigned to SHSP and MCIe shown as part of the health expenditures. When these moneys are added, and expenditures made by the Department of Government Services on behalf of the Department of Public Health, these are included, we find that this year the Government will be spending over $204 million on health services or almost $225 for every man, woman and child.

When the Minister of Finance presented the Budget for the coming year, he said there are two sets of commitments which people expect a government to fulfil. One of these is the written commitment found in the party platform.

There is often a cynicism about politicians and political parties fulfilling their promises, and so far as the old line parties are concerned that cynicism is usually justified.

Mr. Speaker, our party has always taken a different attitude towards election platforms and programs. For one thing, Mr. Speaker, we have a tradition of printing and publishing our platform prior to any election campaign. And we have another tradition, we make every effort to fulfil our commitments, Mr. Speaker.

The Budget address of last Friday, indicated to the people of this province, that this Government is serious about its four-year program, its 'New Deal for People'.

I can still recall the scorn which the Liberal Government spokesmen showered on our 'Program for Progress' when we unveiled it in the winter of 1971. They claimed it was pie-in-the-sky, just socialist propaganda - unrealistic.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget and the one presented by the Premier last year testify to the serious intent of our Government to fulfill its commitments to the people of the province.

I recall when I took part in my first Budget debate in 1965 when I first entered this Legislature, I said that to me a Budget is a setting of priorities, a place where political promises should take concrete action. That's what this Budget is all about, Mr. Speaker, concrete action - action to improve the economic and social well-being of our province and our people.

Mr. Speaker, let me make brief reference to some of the remarks that were made by the Hon. Member for whitmore Park (Mr. Grant). He made allegations that what this Government is 'hopped' on is more tax increases. Well, Mr. Speaker, let us look at the record. In the last 18 months of office what has been the tax increase: Facts are that the only tax increase that has taken place in the term of office is the current increase in corporation income tax and personal income tax. Those two taxes are going to yield somewhere in the order of $8 million Compare this to the benefits that people will derive, in announcing this tax increase in income and corporate tax, we said we wanted to make a tax shift. A shift so that we can more equitably distribute the taxes to our people. What are we doing with the increase? Well, Mr. Speaker, that increase is going to be given to the property owners, to the farm people, to the small business people. These are the people who are going to be the beneficiaries not only of that total tax increase but additional funds will be made available in order for us to hold down the property taxes in this province. A commitment that we made to the people of Saskatchewan, a commitment that we intend to keep.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the Hon. Member arrived at a figure of $272 million increase in government expenditure. Obviously he must not have added up his figures properly. If he is interpreting that by going into the gross budgeting system there is all this additional money being spent then I would suggest that he do a little bit of studying and perhaps consult with some of his colleagues who have supported in previous years the idea of gross budgeting system but have not had the courage to implement it.

Mr. Speaker, if he is that opposed to taxes, then why did he support the tax increase on all the sick people of this province to the tune of $8 million in deterrent fees during the Liberal term of office. The Liberals imposed a tax on meals, they taxed hot dogs, a new tax on hotel rooms, on soap, they taxed practically every item that they could lay their hands on. They increased practically every license fee, every premium that they could possibly tax. He made reference to the liquor tax. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the record. In the last 18 months this Government has not increased any liquor taxes. We are still functioning on the same taxes that were established by the Liberal administration. Under the Liberal administration every 12 months or even shorter periods of time there was an increase in the liquor taxes.

Mr. Speaker, when we introduced our four year program - The New Deal for People - Liberal party spokesmen claimed that it would bankrupt the province.

I recall the Hon. Member for Whitmore Park (Mr. Grant) standing in his place when he was the Minister of Public Health and he got an adding machine out and proceeded to add up what it would cost to remove the deterrent fees. What it would cost to provide free medical and hospital care for the Province of Saskatchewan. What it would cost to provide chiropractic services. Cost of dental care for children and provision of reduced cost of hearing aids to the people of Saskatchewan. He said at that time that this would bankrupt the Province of Saskatchewan. It was almost the same kind of rhetoric that we heard today. The Hon. Member is of the belief that the only good money is private money but public money in his judgment is bad money. I don't accept that notion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, many of the things we promised have now been acted upon. Other programs are at various stages of implementation and Saskatchewan is not bankrupt. In fact the Minister of Finance has demonstrated that the Saskatchewan financial situation is in better shape now than it ever has been.

While on one hand they argued that our four year plan will bankrupt Saskatchewan - on the other hand, one month after we took office the Liberals introduced recommendations urging that the programs that we promised be introduced immediately, not in four years, but they urged us to take immediate action.

The Members opposite exhibited then, as they do now, a measure of cynicism that boggles one's imagination.

They may feel that election promises and party platforms are toys with which to play politics, but the New Democratic Party regards these commitments very seriously.

We are willing to stand or fallon our program and how well we have lived up to it.

We invite the Members of this House and the public to examine the record; What has been promised - and what has now been accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, we promised a Land Bank Commission to promote the maximum number of viable family farms in Saskatchewan. The Land Bank is in operation today. Some $10 million expenditure was made last year with $20 million to be advanced for Land Bank purchases in the current Budget.

We promised to provide capital credit to farmers. The FarmStart program does that, Mr. Speaker. $15 million in the current Budget with grants up to $8,000 for individual farmers, if they qualify to subsidize livestock production. We expanded crop insurance. We agreed to establish a producer controlled Hog Marketing Board and research to assist forward production planning by the farmers. All of these are designed to improve and stablize the farm economy. All promised, all acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, we promised to enact a new Trade Union Act to repeal Bill 2, and to guarantee free collective bargaining. That has been done. We promised to improve and upgrade the Department of Labour and strengthen conciliation and mediation services. That has been done. We promised to increase the minimum wage to $1.75 per hour and to re-organize the Workmen's Compensation Board and increase benefits. And that has been done, Mr. Speaker.

We promised to undertake capital building programs and winter works incentives to create new jobs. We did that and we are continuing programs to create more jobs. As the Minister of Finance pointed out, we've created 19,000 jobs in the last year alone.

We promised assistance to small business. The Government established a business assistance branch within the Department of Industry and Commerce to provide management advice as well as direct grants and loans to eligible business concerns.

We promised a sharp reduction in property taxes, a reduction in mill rates for basic school operating costs on homes, farms and small business. We said that reduction would be to an average 25 mills. Last year the Members opposite attacked us for not meeting that figure in the first year. Government Members replied that we would make the reduction in stages. I can still recall the sarcasm of the Liberal spokesmen.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has shown in detail in his Budget how the Government plans to meet this 25 mill average this year. $30.5 million is provided for the Property Improvement Grants, up to $144 for home owners, $180 for small business, $270 for farmers, a dramatic increase designed to help keep property taxes down.

Further, $10.2 million will be provided to increase the amount of money to school boards to ensure that property taxes for school purposes are not increased this year.

We promised a Housing Corporation. It will be set up this year with a $9.5 million fund. Home building grants will be made available for low income families up to $800 for anyone who wanted to build a home.

A $3 million senior citizens home repair program will be launched this year. Another NDP promise will become a reality.

The Members opposite just don't seem to understand what has been happening. They can't keep up with the new developments that are taking place in Saskatchewan, new programs, new opportunities, new jobs, security for the old, the young, the farmers and the workers.

Liberals are so accustomed to playing fast and loose with the public, that when our party makes a promise and keeps it, the Liberals look for some hidden motivation.

Mr. Speaker, the financial critic for the Opposition, the Hon. Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) revealed his lack of knowledge or his inability to keep up with the programs when he was interviewed on television on the Budget day last week. Perhaps it might have been his extreme bias that was showing.

The Hon. Member said that the NDP has done nothing for senior citizens. Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Hon. Member of just a few things the NDP have done for our senior citizens in our first year and a half of office.

Mr. Speaker, we removed the notorious Liberal deterrent fees, a tax saving of $2 million for those 65 years and over. We gave them free medical and hospital care, another $3 million for the senior citizens. The Budget just brought down last Friday commits $3 million to covering the nursing component of Level II and Level III care for nursing home care for our senior citizens. Another promise fulfilled, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Member for Albert Park missed the Finance Minister's announcement of a $3 million program for home repairs for our senior citizens.

It may be that he was taking a nap when my colleague, Mr. Cowley announced a further $500,000 for nursing home construction in the coming fiscal year. Much of the $9.5 million of low cost housing program announced last Friday will be directed towards helping and will benefit our senior citizens as well. No doubt, he similarly failed to notice the senior citizens' commission that is proposed under the Department of Social Services. The extension in Level IV care that will be provided in this Budget. There is the program to reduce the cost of hearing aids. All of these programs will in a major way benefit the senior citizens of the Province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Liberals to show us when they were in government, in any 18 month period, did a fraction of this for the senior citizens.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Member for Albert Park (Mr. MacLeod) overlooked these programs for our senior citizens inadvertently.

Perhaps the pressure of being on television rattled him.

Mr. Speaker, I can't help but continue with reminding the Hon. Members of some other promises that were made and were kept.

We promised to provide bursaries for university and technical school students. This has been done and this year the amount is being increased by 50 per cent.

We said we would increase employment opportunities for students. We've done that in our summer employment program. We promised regional community education centres to bring educational opportunities closer to the people of Saskatchewan. We've made a solid start on that program, Mr. Speaker.

Promise after promise in the health section of the New Deal for People has been turned into reality. Others are in the various stages of development. The hearing aid program. The dental program for children under 12. Chiropractic service ensured. Deterrent fees abolished. Medicare for senior citizens provided free. The development of alternate methods of delivery of health care, in communities where Liberals closed hospitals. Five health and social centres are in operation and another three in various stages of development.

We promised and established a department of government to have overall responsibility for pollution control and maintenance of the quality of our environment.

We established a new department to pay special attention to the needs of our consumers and this promise has been fulfilled.

We said that we would set up a government information and referral centre with a toll-free 'hotline', to give citizens ready access to information about Government services and to assist in dealing with problems. This is in action, Mr. Speaker, citizens of this province phone in every day to the Provincial Inquiry Centre with their questions and comments.

We promised to restore democratic representation in the Legislature. We set up an Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission to complete a fair redistribution before the next election and periodically thereafter.

That has been initiated, Mr. Speaker. We look for ward with interest to the results of that redistribution. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, he probably would like to represent a meaningful constituency rather than a pocket borough.

Mr. Speaker, this list of NDP promises fulfilled is only a partial list. The list that I have recited is not exhausted. But I will spare the Opposition any further embarrassment. I believe I have made my point.

Our party contested the last election on the basis of a comprehensive program. The Minister of Finance's Budget Address and that of the Premier during the Throne Speech clearly indicate this Government's intention of fulfilling the promises we made in the 1971 election.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Athabasca (Mr. Guy) when he spoke made reference in this House to the provision of dental services in Uranium City. He implied well, Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the Hon. Member from Athabasca of what has been done. Let me put him straight. On September 1st I announced a two-fold program for Uranium City. I said the program provides for a dental clinic to begin in mid-September and for the services of a dentist for at least four months of a year starting in mid-November 1972. In a press release I said the dental clinic was to be staffed by a registered dental hygienist, nurse Helen Wiens and a certified dental assistant, Miss Donna Bartel, both of the Department of Public Health were in Uranium City from September 15, 1972 to October 4, 1972. They saw 541 children for dental preventive purposes.

Mr. Speaker, a dentist, Dr. Dennis Lanigan, Dental Resident, University Hospital, Dental Department, completed his first tour of duty from November 13 to December 18, 1972, in Uranium City. Dr. Lanigan is a Regina native and was the top prize winning student graduating from the Saskatoon Campus last fall, winning both the President's Gold Medal and the College of Dentistry Award. Dr. Lanigan saw III children and 64 adults between November 13 and December 18. Dr. Hamilton, the other dental resident will commence the next tour of duty tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, February 14. Subsequent visits are planned for mid-May and mid-September of this year. We further plan to establish Dental Nursing Services in the North on a permanent basis when graduates from the Dental Technologists Training Program become available for placement. Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Hon. Member for Athabasca to indicate where in all of this we have misled the people of Saskatchewan. As usual we delivered the program that we promised. I invite the Hon. Member to check his facts. Visit Uranium City between elections, it is your constituency. Don't rely on informers who do not know what is happening. I might just add that during the year when the Liberals occupied these benches, they never spent a penny on dental care for Uranium City. Mr. Guy's concern for dental care in Uranium City is touching, Mr. Speaker. All of a sudden he is concerned. But I ask him what did he do about dental care for citizens of Uranium City when he occupied the Treasury Benches?

Mr. Speaker, one of the programs highlighted in the Budget address is the Saskatchewan Hearing Aid Plan. In terms of dollars this is not a large program. It will not benefit all the people. But those who are in need of hearing aids will appreciate the program. The great percentage of those requiring hearing aids are senior citizens, most of them are on fixed incomes. As the incomes of senior citizens are squeezed smaller and smaller by the rising cost of living major items such as hearing aids take a larger and larger bite of an already shrinking dollar of the senior citizens. Those with hearing defects have little choice in most cases. It is either buy a hearing aid or suffer an increasing loss in communication with your friends, your neighbours and your relatives, and being able to listen to radio programs, television or be able to even go to the theatre and enjoy it.

Everyday exchanges which you and I take for granted present serious difficulty for the person who is hard of hearing. One can be almost completely isolated in the midst of a sea of conversation. It is a loneliness few of us can imagine. In most cases, the isolation can be broken by the use of a hearing aid. But increasing numbers of citizens, particularly senior citizens, cannot afford the cost. A hearing aid can cost $300 or $400, some of them are more. On a pension of $150 per month, that is almost an insuperable barrier. All too many of the hard of hearing have to choose between an improvement in hearing or being able to eat properly.

Our researches indicated that the price of hearing aids can be drastically reduced. Since the private sector has failed to respond to this particular need, the Government must, Mr. Speaker. The details of the hearing aid program will be announced in the near future. However, at this time I can promise the hard of hearing that we anticipate being able to provide quality hearing aids at prices well below the average offered today. Mr. Speaker it should be emphasized that our program will not sacrifice quality in order to reduce price. A hearing aid that is cheap in price but doesn't measure up to proper standards of quality would be of little value to the hard of hearing. No doubt we shall hear the usual cries from those who will choose to oppose our plan. I notice in last night's paper that one of the officers of the Hearing Aid Dealers Association has already started jumping to conclusions. Let me assure him and this

Legislature that the cost of our hearing aids will not be $400 each. The $448,000 appropriated in the Budget in part provides for capital expenditures on equipment and necessary facilities which we anticipate will last for 10 years or more. We will also require a supply of aids and other supplies, we anticipate several models and types of aids will be available. All will be of proven high quality performance. I should advise this House that some 85 aids have already been tried and tested. May I advise the vice-president of the Hearing Aid Dealers Association not to fly off the handle too soon. I don't particularly want him to see himself embarrassed. I want however to advise this Legislature, as I have advised the Hearing Aid Dealers Association that at an appropriate time I will discuss our proposal with them. Mr. Cavanagh is correct on one point, it is not our intention to put private dealers out of business. We have one thought in mind and one thought only, that is to provide top quality hearing aids, different types and models, properly tested and fitted, for people who can benefit from the use of a hearing aid, at greatly reduced cost.

Mr. Speaker, may I also say that our program will not only be for the benefit of the senior citizens, it will be for the benefit of all the citizens of Saskatchewan who need the hearing aid.

From the hundreds of letters that I have received in the last 18 months, I am satisfied that there is a need for such a program and that need will be met in 1973.

Mr. Speaker, the inclusion of chiropractic care under the Medical Care Insurance Plan effective February of this year was significant not only because it meant the fulfillment of another commitment made by the New Democratic Party to the people of Saskatchewan, but because it represents another first for Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan plan is unique in Canada, being the only one that does not impose limits on the number or dollar volume of services an individual family may receive. There are nc deterrents, no deductibles. The one-year agreement between the Government and the Chiropractors' Association of Saskatchewan is also unique. It introduces a new method of payment. A contract payment based on the number of years a chiropractor has been in practice since graduation and the number of services provided by each chiropractor. A fee for service basis of payment for office visits and a special formula for X-ray services.

We are pleased, Mr. Speaker, to be able to provide this kind of a comprehensive plan, a universal plan for chiropractic services without any deterrents. This is in keeping with our Government's philosophy that health benefits should be equally available to all citizens of Saskatchewan without regard to their ability to pay.

I am concerned, however, Mr. Speaker, about a recent report which indicates that approximately a dozen chiropractors have not signed the agreement with the Medical Care Insurance Commission. During negotiations with the Chiropractors' Association of Saskatchewan, I was assured that only three or four chiropractors at the most, may oppose the agreement that they negotiated. That indicated to the Government that the vast majority would be very satisfied with the agreement. It would appear that the officers of the Chiropractors' Association misjudged.

It should be pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that although some chiropractors are reported to have failed to sign agreements with the Commission for one reason or another, some two-thirds have signed the agreement. This indicates to me that the sizable majority of chiropractors are willing to work under the Government's plan. I am not surprised that they are willing, the new plan will provide an average gross payment of $30,000 per year to chiropractors in the province. My information is that between 20 and 25 per cent of their gross payment is used for operating expenses. I believe this is fairly good pay for people who &re on their own admission claiming to work an average of 35 hours per week. I think the agreement offered to the chiropractors is a good one. I believe with the sizable majority of the chiropractors accepting agreement, they also agree. I am hopeful that those chiropractors who have not yet signed agreements will soon join the majority of their colleagues. I might add that the department has been receiving phone calls from patients to provide them with names of chiropractors who have signed agreements and who accept the Commission payment as full payment. Others have suggested that we advertise the names of the contract chiropractors in the newspaper. We have not reached any conclusions on these requests and suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about the Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan. The Hon. Member for Lumsden (Mr. Lane) will be particularly interested in what I have to say. He has become something of an expert in recent days on the question of hospital beds. He alleges, so it is reported, that our Government since taking office have reduced the number of hospital beds available to Saskatchewan people. I must advise the Hon. Member that he is correct. The number of hospital beds has been reduced. By how much, Mr. Speaker? By one. In July 1971 when this Government took office, there were 6,677 active treatment beds in Saskatchewan hospitals. On December 31, 1972, 18 months later the number of active treatment beds is 6,676. A reduction of one, that reduction of one bed, Mr. Speaker, we can all be grateful that the Hon. Member has drawn our attention to his concern. However, the Hon. Member for Lumsden did not see fit to give this House and the people of Saskatchewan the full story. Let me put that reduction of one bed into its proper perspective. While there has been a reduction of one bed in the last 18 months, there will be an anticipated rise in expenditure by the Hospital Services Plan of some $10 million in the coming fiscal year. I have already mentioned that it was not possible to include the gross figure for the operation of Hospital Services Plan in the Estimates due to the existing legislation. The present legislation provides that hospital premiums be deposited to the Hospital Services Fund and this income therefore was left out of the Budget Estimates. For the fiscal year 1973-74 the total budget estimated for the Hospital Services Plan is $116 million. This is some $10 million more than is printed in the Estimates.

In Janurary of this year, I met with representatives of the hospitals to outline the Government's plan for hospital programs in the coming year. I indicated to the hospitals that overall hospital planned spending in the calendar year 1972, increased approximately 13 per cent over 1971. I pointed out to those present that some of our neighbouring provinces had announced sharp cutbacks in their allocation to hospitals. I have in front of me, Mr. Speaker, a clipping from the Regina Leader-Post of November 24th, which reads this way in part.

Sharp financial restraints were imposed on Ontario hospitals and institutions of higher learning, Thursday. Health Minister Richard Potter told the Legislature active treatment hospital beds will be limited to an eventual four per thousand of the population. Hospital operating budgets will be held to a maximum increase of 5 per cent in the coming fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, after considering all the factors, our Government has decided to provide an increase of approximately 9 per cent to the hospitals in the coming year. This includes funds for the opening of the South Saskatchewan Hospital Centre later this year. In 1973, hospitals with a bed capacity of 50 beds or more will operate on a global budget system. This will provide financial incentives to those hospitals that economize in the cost of their operations.

You will better appreciate the need for economies when I tell you that while our population decreased from 1968 to 1972 by some 27,000 people, the number of staff employed by hospitals continues to increase. During the same period the rate of hospital admissions increased from 209 per 1000 of population in 1968 to 232 per 1000 population in 1972. This is the highest rate in the country, Mr. Speaker. Based on Federal statistics for the year ending December 31, 1970, our rate of hospital admission of 223.1 was almost double that of Quebec, of 112.6 per 1000 population. The Canadian average for that year was only 151.8. I am told that there has been no appreciable change in that comparison in the subsequent two years. Our rate has risen to 232 per 1000 in 1972. For the period 1968 to 1972 the number of patient days in hospitals increased by over 71,000 while our population declined by 27,000. Mr. Speaker, I have asked the Saskatchewan Hospital Association, Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons, Saskatchewan Medical Association, to carefully examine this unrealistic situation we face in Saskatchewan and ask them to co-operate with us, to bring the hospital utilization closer to that of the national average.

I am hopeful that we can get their co-operation and achieve the desired results. I should point out to the Members of the Assembly and the public that control of hospital admissions is in the hands of the medical profession and the hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, while this Government has emphasized the search for alternative methods of health care delivery, we have not neglected improvements in our hospital system. Saskatchewan people enjoy a standard of hospital care that is second to none. While looking for economies in the delivery of health services, we have no intention of sacrificing quality, Mr. Speaker.

During this past year, we purchased the Grey Nuns Hospital and launched a comprehensive study of hospital needs and facilities in Regina under Dr. Graham Clarkson. With the opening of the new Base Hospital expected later this year, Regina will have a complete range of hospital services. More than $500,000 has been budgeted to complete construction of the new hospital which will be used as a training facility for medical students in southern Saskatchewan. The total cost of the hospital is expected to be close to $16 million. When the results of the Clarkson study are received, we expect to be able more fully to integrate hospital services in the city of Regina.

A major expansion and renovation project for the University Hospital at Saskatoon was announced a few months ago. The project involves an $18.3 million addition to the hospital and $7.3 million for renovation and approximately $2 million for construction of a clinical dental facility. Some $2 million has been included in this year's estimates for the project which will provide extended out-patient facilities, more research space and expansion related to the need of the College of Medicine and the Dentistry. A further $6.5 million is included in the cash carry-over for future expansion of this project. The Saskatoon project will not include more beds, rather the emphasis will be on ambulatory care, improved diagnostic services and expanded research facilities. Permanent clinical facilities for the Dental College in Saskatoon are part of the project.

Completion of these major hospital projects in Regina and Saskatoon will ensure in the years ahead to the citizens of this province continued excellent care and services equal to any services elsewhere in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I note with interest how quickly the Opposition chose to point out the sizable increase in the Department of Social Services. So far, however, none of the critics have made mention that $8.5 million of the Social Services budget is a transfer of programs from the Department of Public Health, the Moose Jaw and Prince Albert Training Schools, the Level III Riverside Home at North Battleford. Our Budget also includes many small health items which I think by themselves do not represent a lot of money, but they are significant in the development of better health facilities.

The province will provide funds to operate the Alvin Buckwold Centre at Saskatoon. For five years this pilot project was paid by the Federal Government. The cost of the Oxbow Dental Pilot project will be assumed by the province at a cost of $102,000. These two projects are good examples of how Ottawa is prepared to provide start-up funds, but after the program is developed, and accepted by the people, the province is left holding the bag.

The Budget provides for 57 beds at North Battleford and an additional 10 beds in Yorkton. I might add that the Government is closely examining Level IV bed needs in Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and other smaller communities. We proposed to provide at the Regina General Hospital a separate facility and staff for treating patients with alcohol and drug problems. This is estimated to cost some $32,000.

A special out-patient program for psychiatric patients will be developed at the University Hospital at a cost of some $50,000 to the Government. A cardiograph rehabilitation program will be initiated at the Regina General at a cost of some $14,000. The orthopedic clinic for patients suffering from deformities, disease or injuries of the bones and joints will be started at Wascana Hospital. A respiratory disease program has received high priority by the medical staff at the University Hospital. A trained chest physician has been placed on the hospital staff. His main job will be the development of new methods of treatment for respiratory diseases. The cost of this program too will be underwritten by the Government. Other smaller programs have been approved and are included in our budget.

Mr. Speaker, in September 1972 we started the first dental therapist training program in Canada. The first group of 36 students were enrolled. They will graduate in 1974. This year we propose to start the dental program for children. We propose to increase the size of the training class in 1973. An advisory commit on dental care has been established and will be recommending how the dental program for children is to function. It is expected the committee recommendations will be received by the end of March, this year. Legislation will be introduced during this Session for the registration and licensing of dental technologists. The program has aroused the curiosity of every province in Canada. And in fact, we have had many enquiries from south of the border. When the program is initiated it will be another first for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, after seven years, seven lean years of Liberal administration where Saskatchewan stood still and in some cases fell behind in health development, now after 18 months of NDP Government, Saskatchewan is again taking its rightful place in regaining its leadership role with new, experimental and innovative health programs.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Budget presented so ably by my colleague, the Minister of Finance. I support it because, in so many areas, the Budget testifies this Government's intention to honour its election commitments.

Ours is a party which regards the electoral process as an honest and useful way of presenting alternative programs to the public. We are prepared to debate the issues on their merits. We invite the Members opposite to either present their reasonable alternatives to the Government or to join in supporting the worthwhile programs outlined in the Budget address.

However the Opposition judges us, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the electors will judge us on how well we have done in implementing our 'New Deal for People'.

Mr. Speaker, I will support the Budget.