



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

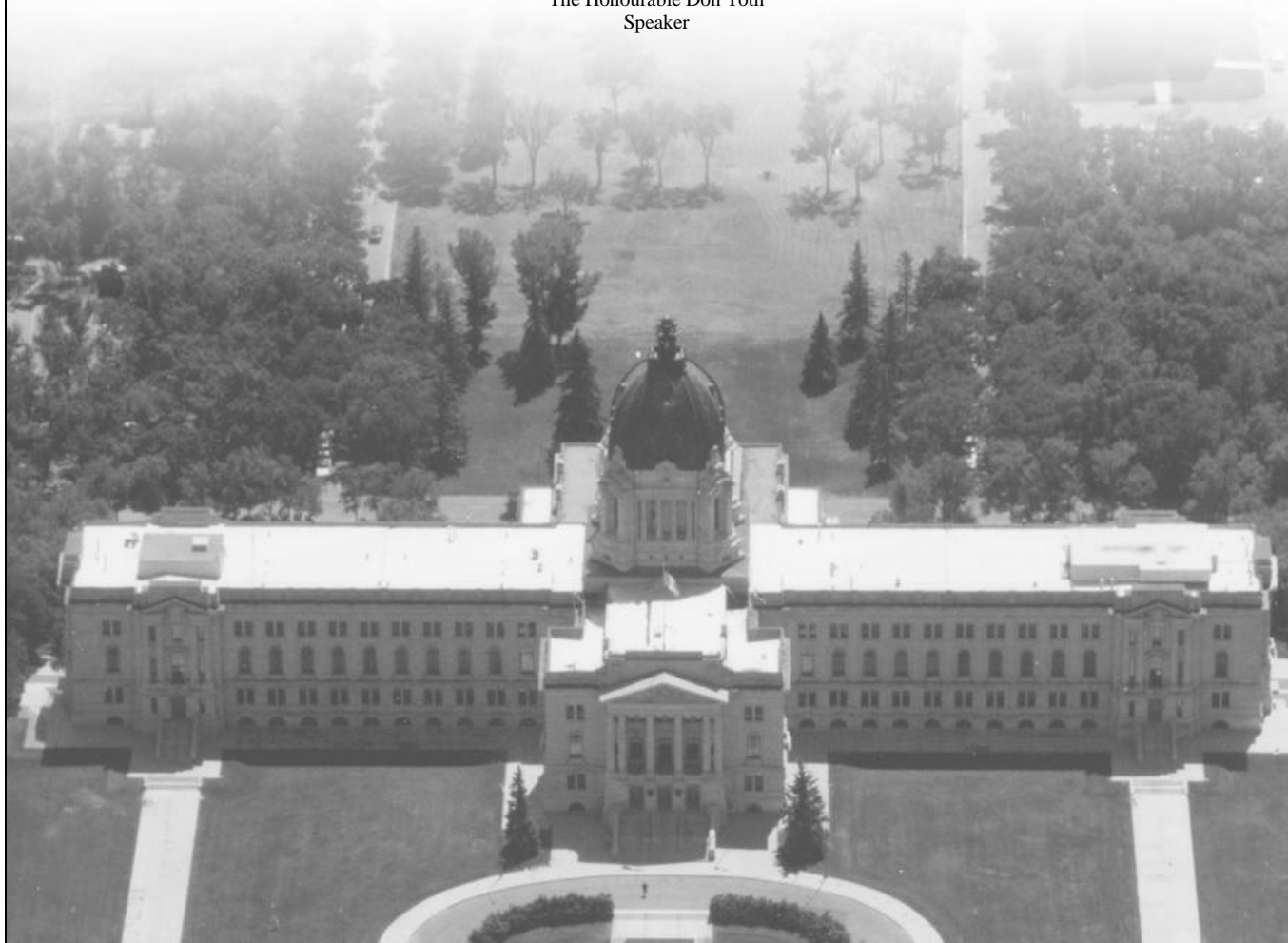
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Dwain Lingenfelter

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Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

The Deputy Speaker: — The House now resumes. Debate will continue on the budget. I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Like when you're reading a good book and you're interrupted and you have to put it down, when you pick it up you back up a little bit just to make sure you get where you were at. So I'm going to back up just a little bit because I was into a lovely story that I'd like you all to hear.

Saskatchewan's birth came in 1905, but Saskatchewan's rebirth comes with this budget. After 60 years of dormancy, Saskatchewan has come out of its cocoon. We have shed the cocoon-like blanket that has been smothering us and dragging us backwards since the dirty thirties. Just like that cocoon, Saskatchewan was hanging in a dark, upside-down world with no hopes, dreams, or expectations of a brighter day, just eternal darkness, failure, and continued decline as we begged for more equalization payments.

These were the barriers surrounding us on all sides, letting no one in, driving away investment, and sending our children to seek their futures elsewhere. Everyone said, woe is poor Saskatchewan, the poor little have-not province. Now Saskatchewan is like an emerging butterfly spreading its wings for the first time. Now we can finally believe in ourselves and take our destiny into our own hands. We are shedding the blanket of fear, loathing, and insignificance that has been dragging us backward and destroying us as our young people left and our population fell.

As we take flight, we can see on the horizon sights that just three and a half short years ago seemed unattainable. We see Saskatchewan as an economic powerhouse, not just in Canada but as a global juggernaut. As we spread our wings, the world is watching. We have what the world needs, and as the world's population grows, the need for potash grows. Today, as in the future, world food supplies will depend on Saskatchewan potash. In order to supply the food needs for the growing population of this planet, maximum food production will be critical. This means an ever larger role for our potash. The NDP [New Democratic Party] would like to raise the amount of royalties charged to the potash companies. The present royalty agreement that we are under with the potash companies was signed and negotiated by the former NDP government. Their

present leader was deputy leader at that time. Now the NDP says, let's push the royalties higher. Think this through: we have 50 per cent of the world's potash. That means 50 per cent of the potash is elsewhere. Let's not get greedy.

I understand that the new mine at Jansen would employ 800-plus employees if it goes forward. We would really hate to lose those jobs. We have the highest royalties in the world already. And the NDP says go higher. Let's not get greedy. Have the NDP not heard of the fairy tale of the goose that laid the golden potash egg? The goose had to be fed or it dies. The NDP not only plan to quit feeding the goose that laid the golden potash egg, they intend to strangle her and butcher her. Again I say, let's not get greedy.

World supplies of oil are always greatly affected by conflict. As we can see by what is happening with the world situation and oil prices today, Middle Eastern oil is often conflict oil and is very expensive, not only in dollars but in human lives. Saskatchewan oil is conflict-free. More and more, this is being realized by global consumers. Once again Saskatchewan moves up as a more and more credible player in that market.

Uranium is also a large part of our future. There is less and less opposition to uranium because the alternatives are unable to stand alone in supplying the world energy hunger. When you look at wind or solar or various other sources, they're a great supplement, a great supplement to the energy picture, but they do not stand alone. They should be developed and expanded, but at present they cannot stand alone.

No one is ready to have less energy. With the world population growing, the demand for energy is always increasing. This leaves nuclear as the only viable alternative and Saskatchewan is taking a leading role in research and development. We are the world leader in uranium mining. Therefore it's only right that we play a lead role in development and research. It will be another big win for Saskatchewan when the first medical isotope is mined, manufactured, and used here in Saskatchewan. With medical isotopes so critical to the treatment of cancer and medical procedures, this Saskatchewan Party government is committed to reaching that goal.

The leader of the NDP is proposing rent control in our province. This is very strange considering his government were the ones to cancel rent control. They discovered that in spite of their best efforts rent control did not work. In fact it was the cause of fewer rental spaces available. They had every opportunity to rework the concept, but they found that rent control didn't work. Now the NDP think they can make it an election issue, and they're yelling rent control even though they know it will not work. This is just another example of the regular NDP flip-flop. Which way is the wind blowing today?

Big news from the budget for Prince Albert. Prince Albert is getting a new gym for P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton High School. Carlton is the largest high school in this province, and the new gym has been on order for some time. The old gym was highly inadequate, and the new gym is a perfect fit at this time. Congratulations to Prince Albert, to Prince Albert Carlton High School and its many students.

One of the greatest impacts this budget will have on the people of this province is the lowering of taxes. The tax burden was so large it was smothering us. When taxes are lowered, everyone gains.

Batoche constituency is mainly a rural constituency, so I must address agriculture. The Saskatchewan Party has cut the education portion of property tax by 80 per cent. This takes the burden imposed by the NDP off the backs of rural Saskatchewan. For years they have suffered under this unfair tax. This government will also fully fund the cost of farm stabilization programs along with record crop insurance coverage.

Small business is the backbone of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Party recognizes that. Therefore we are taking steps to help this cornerstone of our economy to grow their businesses and in turn grow our province. We are cutting small-business tax by more than 50 per cent.

The province's share of education property tax was at 40 per cent under the NDP. Now, thanks to the hard work of the Saskatchewan Party, the government now pays 65 per cent. The property owner's share has fallen from a high of 60 per cent down to 35. This is a quantum leap for all the people of Saskatchewan, not just the farmers. Finally, tax relief.

We've also raised the entry level on personal income tax. These measures are unique in all of Canada. In most other provinces, the tax bill is still going up. Truly this is a Saskatchewan advantage.

We have also paid \$325 million to lower the province's debt. This brings the provincial debt to \$3.8 billion, its lowest level since 1987. These are giant steps for our province. The so-called wee province is paying off debt when all other provinces' debts are increasing. Considering the global recession, this is indeed a giant step on the road to our success.

Our government has shown tremendous growth in the management of health care by increasing the number of seats in the College of Medicine, increasing the number of residency seats, increasing the number of nursing training seats, training and facilitating the use of more nurse practitioners, broadening the scope of pharmacists by allowing them to write certain prescriptions — this will free up a lot of doctor time — shortening surgical wait times, and of course the children's hospital.

No one gets everything they want from a provincial budget, but in this budget everyone gets something. Everyone in Saskatchewan benefits from this budget. It is an all-inclusive budget. The budget shows direction and leadership. The budget sets up the framework for the future of this great province. We are now setting records in this province, and our population is at the highest level it has ever been, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the highest that it has ever been. This is phenomenal. The NDP laughed when the former leader of the Saskatchewan Party, Elwin Hermanson, predicted a growth rate of 1 per cent. We have exceeded that. Who's laughing now? We are living the dreams — and beyond — of our ancestors.

The great visionary, the Hon. Walter Scott, the first premier of

Saskatchewan, had dreams for our Saskatchewan. What would he say if he could see us now? He would probably say, what took you so long? What have you been doing for the last 60 years? I gave you a good start. Why have you been going backwards? I can't tolerate that backsliding, but I see that you have finally turned this province around and are once again headed in the right direction. It is good to see this beautiful and resource-rich province finally getting on its feet and not just going somewhere but leading the pack. I always said there is tremendous potential in this province. Stay away from those socialist ideas and stay the course. The time has come to build, to dream, and to move this province into its rightful place. Keep up the good work. You have a province to build.

My final remark will be from a noted broadcaster columnist and now author, and I quote, "This year's budget was Saskatchewan at its finest." Mr. Speaker, for all the above reasons, I will be wholeheartedly and enthusiastically supporting this year's budget.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to get up and speak on the budget tonight, which I thought was probably one of the best budgets this province has ever seen. The Minister of Finance spent many hours on this, as many of us did, and presented probably one of the most exciting budgets, I believe, for my constituents in the Melville-Saltcoats constituency.

Mr. Speaker, there was something for pretty well everybody in this province in that budget. And I think we see that, Mr. Speaker, by question period following the budget where we've normally had budgets and then the opposition — whether we were there and now the NDP are over there — for days would ask questions on the budget. They'd find something they felt was wrong with it. We had the Finance critic from the NDP side, what did he get up on the day after the budget? Was it two days later? Two questions, and that's all we've had. Now there can't be much wrong with the budget when the NDP, within all their pessimism they're trying to spread across the province, can't find any more than two questions to ask on the budget. And that's really a slap on the back for our Finance minister, the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Speaker, he's brought in a balanced budget, I think been recognized by everyone in the province this time. Even the NDP are agreeing that the budget is balanced. There's a surplus. We lowered taxes, Mr. Speaker.

And I often think, I have three kids, Mr. Speaker, and six grandkids out there. But I think of my kids — two are teachers and one is an accountant, Mr. Speaker — and when we lower taxes out there, it's like giving each of my kids a raise because their take-home dollars are there. They're going to be taking home more money than they were before.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, if it was good for my kids out there, it's good for everybody else's kids right across this province. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that's why a lot of the young people are coming back to the province of Saskatchewan, because of the opportunity, the jobs and that that

they have here in Saskatchewan, and just probably the greatest place to raise a family that you could find anywhere in this country or, for that matter, around the world.

Mr. Speaker, we also should credit the Health minister with improved health care. And we see in this budget a number of issues addressed again, but I think more importantly than any of the others is the shortening of the waiting lists. Mr. Speaker, we all know we inherited some of the longest waiting lists in this country from the previous NDP government. And really it tracks back, Mr. Speaker, back to probably into the '90s when hospitals were closed and there was — what? — 52 hospitals closed, 53 hospitals closed, doctors chased out of the province, nurses chased out of the province. And then under the former administration, of course, they wouldn't set any goals to try and replace that complement of nurses or doctors, whatever it was, because they knew they couldn't meet that commitment. I think the member for North Battleford spoke about that one day where he said, we don't want to set goals because we know we can't achieve those goals.

Well I go back to the Health minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because he did meet those goals. He made the commitment we would hire 800 nurses in this province, and he's exceeded that mark. And I think it's showing up right across the province in all of our regional hospitals and in the larger centres and in the nursing care that we're receiving out there. And at the same time he's also working on addressing the doctor issue. And we know that issue is right across this country; it's not just here in Saskatchewan. But he's working very hard to find a new complement of doctors and add to what we already have in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Better roads and highways. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Minister of Highways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the improvement that we see to our highways out there. And spring, this is the time of year where we see highways are in their, probably their worst condition of the year, where highway crews are about to go out there and start repairing and resurfacing. And I think we're going to see that again this year. And I think the people across the province realize the situation with our highways and the improvement. Just all right across, improved services, I think, in many of the areas that we provide services and that we should provide as government.

[19:15]

Another thing I want to talk about, the good job the Finance minister has done is paying the debt down. And I was at a couple of functions on the weekend. And one of the compliments I think we got more often than not was, it's so good to see you paying the debt down. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we've come from — what? — in excess of \$7 billion just three and a half years ago to where the Finance minister announced the other day I think we're down to about 3.8 billion, almost cut the debt in half in three and a half years, Mr. Speaker. And I think all of us, all of us on this side of the House hope within the next four years — and we hope to be government, and I think we will be — that that debt can be totally eliminated. And boy will that ever be a load off the back of taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think a budget like this, and I think this is

another message I got at home, it's just something in this budget for everybody in the province, every taxpayer, everybody out there, improving the quality of life. And, Mr. Speaker, of course as you know, I'm a little bit biased, but when it comes to our farmers and our ranchers right across the province, that's a priority. And I think this budget has helped deal with that.

I found it interesting today, Mr. Speaker, and I know it's frustrating for the members opposite when they see a budget like that was presented here. It's frustrating because, as I said, the critic for Finance couldn't find anything to really ask about. And the frustration comes from a budget that deals with something for everybody out there. But I think their biggest frustration, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is doom and gloom is not selling in the province of Saskatchewan any more. People of this province have heard the fearmongering for far too long, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think right across this province everybody is busy working. They have jobs; they are making money; they are raising their families. And I think really they are leaving the NDP behind. Or the NDP is leaving themselves behind because if you watch the polling, it just continually, slowly to erode. And I think probably for the province of Saskatchewan that is probably one of the most positive signs I have seen in my 16 years in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I have sat through many budgets as an opposition member, and I have to admit in some of them I actually almost fell asleep because most times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would see rural Saskatchewan totally ignored, budget after budget. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have changed that. In the first three budgets that we have had and now into the fourth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture is a priority again in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget when the Finance minister presented it the other day, \$418 million for the agriculture budget, Mr. Speaker, that is the second highest budget day announcement ever announced for agriculture, and that was only upped by the 2009 budget. So this is the second highest within the first four years.

Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, \$380 million for business risk management programs. And the other day I noticed the Leader of the Opposition was out and criticizing higher crop insurance premiums, Mr. Speaker. Well I think he better check with producers across this province because, as I have said, the reason for higher crop insurance premiums is because grain prices have gone up. And that is probably one of the best signs we have seen for a long time, along with livestock prices improving. And it's great to see both of them going up at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, within the crop insurance also, the program that we have presented this year and put out there for producers to take a good look at is \$161 million from the provincial government. And, Mr. Speaker, as we know, that's cost shared between producers, provincial and federal governments, but that is the largest amount a provincial government has ever put into a crop insurance program in the province's history. Mr. Speaker, the coverage per acre on average has gone up to \$173. That's in excess of \$40 an acre on average that that's gone up due to higher prices. And I think that has been welcomed from producers right across the province because that's one of the things that they have asked

for many, many years. They had wished they could have higher coverage to cover more of the risk that they have out there, Mr. Speaker.

One of the other changes that we made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the unseeded acreage benefits. And as we all know last year was a trying year for every producer across this province due to the flooding and unseeded acres. So this year, Mr. Speaker, we've included where, or we've changed from where it was \$50 for unseeded acres last year, we've raised that to \$70 an acre. And, Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to say that won't solve all the problems across the province, but it certainly will help cover a little more of the risk that producers take out there and a little more of their input costs that they have.

Another area that was announced just lately, Mr. Speaker, is seven new satellite offices. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will remember as I do and I know many of the people on this side of the House, under the former NDP government one budget alone I remember they cut, closed, 22 rural service centres across the province of Saskatchewan. In total I think it was 31 agriculture offices were closed across the province. What we were finding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there's pockets in the province where there's gaps of many hundred kilometres between offices. And we've worked to change that, with opening seven new satellite offices in Shaunavon, Estevan, Moosomin, Lloydminster, Meadow Lake, Assiniboia, and Wadena. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, this is a two-year pilot. We'll see how the uptake is at these offices where we put our specialists in there, whether it's livestock or crop or forage specialists, a day or two days a week. And if the uptake is good, we'll look at it down the road to making this a long-term commitment to those communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also research, and we all know how important research is, especially in the agriculture industry. And we've increased that 30 per cent since forming government in 2007 — \$18.2 million for research in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rat control program, we've added \$150,000 for that program.

The SPCA [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals], I just want to talk a minute on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who have . . . The SSPCA [Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] have done some tremendous work in this province where they from time to time have to deal with neglect or abuse for animals across the province, and we've increased the funding for that program \$380,000 in '11 and '12. So, Mr. Speaker, since we came to power, their funding has increased about 111 per cent. And they do very good work for us. They do very good work for the people of Saskatchewan.

And we'll continue funding programs like FRWIP [farm and ranch water infrastructure program], Crown land incentive program. And as I said, the gopher program, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to pay that 50 per cent rebate on that program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think one of the tremendous parts of this budget and I think the member for Canora-Pelly has also . . . This has been one of the things that he's wanted to work on for many, many years out there, is the education tax on ag land. Mr. Speaker, there's about an 80 per cent reduction since 2007 on the education tax rebate. And I know, along with an awful

lot of my colleagues over here, I have been to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention after SARM convention where previous NDP premiers would get up to the mike and say, status quo is not on; we'll be addressing the education tax on farm land. And did it happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

It never, never happened. They did a few little band-aid solutions, and then back up it would go. And I think if I remember right, it was about 65 per cent that the ag producers in this province, farmers and ranchers, were paying towards the cost of education and the government had dropped their share down to about 35 per cent. Do you know what we've done? And you do know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we've reversed that trend. Now the province of Saskatchewan is paying the 65 per cent.

And, Mr. Speaker, had more than probably one member been at the SARM convention over there . . . The Ag critic should have took five minutes out from his boxing lessons and probably took a little time off and gone to SARM convention because he'd have heard some very positive things about what's happening in the province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there wasn't a ratepayer at the SARM convention that wasn't pleased with what's happened to the education tax relief on property.

And I know the member from Moose Jaw, who was at the SARM convention, saw how well received the municipal revenue sharing was, where now we've committed to 1 per cent of the PST [provincial sales tax]. And of course the way this province and the economy of this province is growing, that funding is going to increase as the PST increases in the province. And I know I saw Dave Marit's comments, and I've saw a number of the Reeves and councillors out there and mayors right across this city, whether they're from the cities or small towns, look forward to that stable revenue sharing for their communities because in their communities of course they have infrastructure dollars they need to put in there, and this additional revenue sharing will certainly help with that.

I want to commend the Minister for Enterprise on the renewable diesel mandate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a 2 per cent mandate by July of 2012. And he's come out with a five-year incentive program from 2011 to 2016, \$26 million for that program. And I notice Milligan Bio-Tech were very positive on this announcement, and I think that bodes well for Milligan Bio-Tech and other companies out there that might be thinking of getting into this industry and possibly even expanding what they have now. Milligan Bio-Tech, by the way, is just a very important business out there for the ag sector, where they can utilize canola products out there that have either been frozen or maybe they've had grain spoil in a bin or something like that. Milligan can utilize, and they pay good dollars for those products out there where normally we may not even be able to move them.

As I spoke before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, debt reduction was very important when I went out to functions this weekend out there. Lower taxes: the personal basic exemption has rose for adults \$1,000 and for children \$500. That's certainly going to help. Two hundred and fifty more for regional health authorities across the province. And I know my home area, the Yorkton area, we're certainly, with a growing population out there, need

extra dollars to provide the service and health care that people need out there. I think that's going to be a very positive thing. Another the other communities were pleased to see was more money for policing, as I talked about with the Minister of Highways before, more money for Highways.

The one program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take a minute or two and talk about is under the leadership of the member from Melfort, is the STARS [shock trauma air rescue service] program. And I had a number of mayors already, the mayor of Churchbridge the other day I believe it was, the mayor of Langenburg, were talking about the STARS program. And Esterhazy, I had a function there the other day where they were even commenting on it saying, we have a number of mines out there in the Esterhazy area, a number of potash mines and a lot of exploration going on out there. And they think the STARS program is going to be one of the best things we've seen in rural Saskatchewan to address . . . And we hope we never need it out there. I guess the best scenarios would be if we never saw one of these helicopters come into our area. But should the need arise . . . I think Mosaic is a good example where we have two mines there. I know that Mr. Speaker has a mine at Rocanville.

Sometimes, from time to time, we have need of something like the STARS program to come out, and it can save lives. And it doesn't have to be an accident. It could be a heart attack; it could be a stroke. But it could be something that someone in rural Saskatchewan did not have the opportunity before and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know we don't see much criticism from the other side on this program because it's something that they probably, probably, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would dream about but waited for a Sask Party government to get into power to actually deal with something like this.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many good things happening in the province. The children's hospital, I get comments at home about that. Because it doesn't matter where you live in this province, whether you are a father or a mother, have kids, or you are a grandpa or a grandma. I know in my case, I know I look young for this but I do have some grandkids. And that children's hospital, that children's hospital any day could be a life-saving thing for one of my grandkids or anyone in this House, and I know it's going to be welcomed by everybody in this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think as you can surmise by the comments that I have made, I certainly will be supporting this budget. I really appreciate what the Finance minister in this province has done and, Mr. Speaker, I guess, you know, what I would say to the people of this province is, let's not return and go back to where we were in the past where we wanted to be a have-not province. We wanted equalization from the federal government to survive. Let's just sit back and enjoy the ride and enjoy what's happening in the province of Saskatchewan. And I certainly will be supporting this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and offer my comments about

the provincial budget.

First off I would like to thank the constituents of Moose Jaw Wakamow for supporting me over the years. It's a great community to represent and I do so proudly, and it is a privilege indeed to represent Moose Jaw Wakamow. I also want to thank my family for the support that we get because this is a difficult job, but it's one that we have stepped into with the support of our families, and that's always appreciated.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you to the staff in my office in Moose Jaw because I know that they are holding down the fort and paying attention to the needs of constituents that may phone or come to the office. It's something that they put a great deal of dedication and do a very good job at, and I think they're an asset not only to me but to the constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this past week when we saw the government table their final budget before this fall's provincial election, with record revenues flowing into the provincial coffers, this budget included quite a bit of spending in a variety of areas, and was without a doubt a pre-election budget.

And while listening to the speech by the Minister of Finance — I guess it's what I've always done — I always listen for initiatives that'll impact my community. And more specifically, I was looking for a commitment to funding to the Moose Jaw Union Hospital project. Now this is the very same project that the now Premier said was a top priority for the Saskatchewan Party government in 2007. This is the same project that was mentioned by the former minister of Finance on a budget day address three years ago. It's also the same project that was mentioned at the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities convention this fall by the Premier — this spring, pardon me — by the Premier and the Minister of Health. But it was conspicuously absent from mention in this budget, with no money committed towards capital.

[19:30]

So it seems that this government can develop detailed planning for a domed stadium with a retractable roof in a matter of months, but they're having difficulty with the expansion to the Moose Jaw Union Hospital, which I have to say would serve more people than a domed stadium here in the city of Regina. And yes, I will agree, hospitals are quite a bit more complicated than domed stadiums. But this project has been in the works for six years, and there's been absolutely no shortage of provincial money to be able to move this project along. And I guess what it gets down to is that the people in Moose Jaw are really beginning to wonder if the Moose Jaw Union Hospital project truly is a priority for this government.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other areas that I was listening for, and it's an issue in Moose Jaw and in just about every other community around the province, and that's the issue of housing. And with such concern right across the province, it was really a disappointment to hear that \$1.7 million was committed to a so-called housing strategy. And actually it was two programs that were announced. 1.5 million was to provide, will be provided to develop up to 300 rental units by assisting municipalities in their efforts to increase the supply of

affordable renting units, and another \$200,000 will go to help municipalities stimulate home ownership opportunities by reimbursing participating municipalities for the education portion of the property tax.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, both programs are sadly underfunded and lacking anything that vaguely resembles a housing strategy. And obviously the Sask Party's version of a housing strategy is just to leave it up to the municipalities with some really token contributions by the provincial government.

But it really adds insult to Saskatchewan families and individuals that are struggling to find affordable housing, and the Saskatchewan . . . especially, I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party felt it was more appropriate to put \$5.1 million into beer discounts for off-sale retailers. So when you get a beer discount that receives more funding than an affordable housing strategy, we need to question the priorities of this government.

But, Mr. Speaker, with all the money that's being spent in this pre-election budget, I do want to say there was a couple of good initiatives that were in the budget. The Minister of Agriculture just talked about ag stability. I have a fair area of agricultural land in my constituency, south from Moose Jaw to just past Spring Valley. It covers ranchland, some crop land, pasture land, lots of cattle out there. But, Mr. Speaker, it looks like it could be another . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, it looks like it could be another unusual and unpredictable year, so I am pleased that the AgriStability programs are fully funded and there if producers need them.

One of the other areas where there was good news was that finally municipalities will receive the full share of the municipal operating grant. That has been delayed because of the government's poor financial planning over the past couple of years. Now this new funding was expected and it has already been built in to municipal budgets. So if anyone is expecting this new money to somehow offset the property tax increases that are showing up across the province in many communities, I don't believe this will offset those increases because in many cases or in most cases it has been already built into budgets.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do have to comment. The member from Wood River in his comments, I believe, last night . . . And I guess this is good news too. And he said in his comments, well for one thing it's a real balanced budget. So it's nice to see that even the members in the government benches realize that other budgets have not been real balanced budgets. They have had savings that have been used and debt that has been used to really move those budgets into the black. So I'm glad to see that even the government members realize that there is a difference between a real balanced budget and one that is made real or made balanced by using up some of your savings. So it was just a comment.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the budget has left many in our province exactly in the same position that they were before budget day with no real support for issues of affordability that are affecting many Saskatchewan families: high rental rate for accommodation, no real support for affordable housing, food prices that are expected to start to climb shortly, increasing transportation and utility costs. Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on.

And with historic revenue in provincial coffers, the government is doing very well, but the question remains, are you feeling any of this prosperity?

Now the member from Yorkton made the comments earlier this evening that everyone felt the benefits of this budget, but I would ask him . . . Last week there was questions that were asked before the budget. The Minister of Finance stood and said 92,000 people didn't pay income tax. And I would ask him, what is in this budget for those? What is in this budget for people who don't pay tax, who are struggling to make ends meet? And, Mr. Speaker, the answer is nothing. And that's the disagreeable part, and the part that is very hard to be able to sell to our constituents and make them feel any comfort with the budget.

And also, Mr. Speaker, when we listen to the . . . When I commented on the member from Wood River's comments about it being a real balanced budget, all you have to do is look at the government's own documents, and we see, even if it is balanced, we're seeing debt continuing to climb. And I will quote from the budget summary documents, page 60, and it says, "Public debt is forecast to increase by \$375.9 million during 2010-11 and increase by an additional \$485.3 million in 2011-12."

And also, "Government business enterprise specific public debt is forecast to increase by \$507 million during 2010-11 and increase by an additional \$755.2 million during 2011-12." And it says that "The increases in both years are almost entirely attributable to higher long-term debt for the utility Crown corporations."

So, Mr. Speaker, this is part of the shell game. When you look at some of this stuff, how's the debt being portrayed? Of course they're using it as not being portrayed. What the government is saying, well we're not in debt. Everything's balanced; life is wonderful. And they're ignoring a chunk of the population in the province of Saskatchewan that have worked hard through good years and bad years. And, Mr. Speaker, it's frustrating.

And, Mr. Speaker, even though we talk about housing, we've seen very little. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are members on the government side where they in their communities have seen senior citizens who are being forced out of their accommodation because of increased rent. They are seeing low-income families or working families who are struggling to find a decent place to live. And you can't tell me that all of them can stand and say, oh it's not happening in my constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, but they're not doing anything about it. And SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] at their conference called the housing shortage a crisis. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a problem.

And when we see health care continuing to struggle with underfunding and a Sask Party government that is solid in their view that private care is better than public, when we see doctor shortages increasing, and we see bidding wars between communities to see who can offer the best incentives to recruit doctors, all you have to do is look at Wakaw, Carlyle, Coronach, Moose Jaw, Rosetown, Leader — all communities with shortages of doctors, and there's many, many more.

And when the Minister of Health got up and talked about the doctor recruitment committee, sounds good. But what was the first thing that this doctor recruitment committee did? Well they spent \$200,000 for new furniture and to move their office from Saskatoon to Regina.

An Hon. Member: — The other way around.

Ms. Higgins: — Well from Regina to Saskatoon, but still 200,000. Now, Mr. Speaker, can you imagine what Wakaw could have done with \$200,000? Two hundred thousand dollars would have paid to keep the beds open in Wawota. But the minister feels there's a higher priority here.

Now some organizations such as PAIRS [Professional Association of Internes and Residents in Saskatchewan] have actually withdrawn from this doctor recruitment committee because they didn't feel that it was worthwhile. And when we see all these problems, Mr. Speaker . . . Now we have the government looking at air ambulance helicopters and the program is not even up and running yet, but the price has gone up by millions already. And, Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting to see the 13 communities move ahead with long-term care facilities that were announced over two years ago.

And then we see, Mr. Speaker, municipalities trying to cope with roads, sidewalks, sewers, and water mains that are crumbling, but the government says there will be no help in this budget, no infrastructure funding at all. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not about a shortage of revenue, it is about priorities. And this government has money for pet projects and friends but not for Saskatchewan citizens. And it gets to the question, Mr. Speaker, that this government is doing well, but are you? Your utility bills are up. Citizens are struggling with private long-term care. Municipal taxes are up, and they are going up again this year with the downloading of services to municipalities. Ambulance costs have increased to citizens while government pursues helicopters. And health services are being privatized, Mr. Speaker, and it goes on and on. And Saskatchewan residents are still dealing with some of the highest housing costs anywhere in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the highest provincial revenues in the history of the province, but the Sask Party government is running up provincial debt, and average Saskatchewan residents are feeling squeezed. It's not about the lack of revenues; it's about the priorities of this government.

Mr. Speaker, Enterprise Saskatchewan is well financed — \$41 million this year, but can anyone please name anything they have accomplished? We've seen flashy announcements and press conferences talking about clean coal and carbon sequestration, doomed domed stadiums, and today's housing announcement may just end up in that pile, waiting to see if anything ever becomes of it.

There's no shortage of dollars, and where's the money coming from? So among some huge increases in resource revenues, there's been a fair bit of money that's been taken out of the Crown corporations. So for two years — that's two years, Mr. Speaker — the Crown corporations have had all profits and retained earnings stripped and moved to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]. The government spends the money while the

Crowns have to borrow to maintain services and improve business. So now the Minister of Finance is grumbling, and I have to say I'm sure this sounds familiar to him. And for us taxpayers, it means that our utility rates will be going up to cover the costs.

And the Minister of Agriculture was just talking about the children's hospital. Good project, a very good project, Mr. Speaker, but paid for entirely by the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan; no credit to these members here. It's money that the Crown corporations have raised through business case and for providing good service to the people of Saskatchewan. So please, you need to be, you need to be serious about this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now the Minister of Advanced Ed all of a sudden has his voice. He doesn't seem to have an answer during question period, doesn't want to talk about those issues, but all of a sudden he's found his voice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from Yorkton was also talking about business case and how the previous government hadn't dealt with these issues on a business basis. Well I'd have to say to him, and what business case does it fit under the Sask-first policy, where SaskPower business is contracted out to Northlands Power?

[19:45]

It is not dealing with Sask-first. It is not allowing the companies to operate in a business fashion. It's imposing their ideological viewpoint. And, Mr. Speaker, those of us as taxpayers — and I'm sure many taxpayers don't realize this — but we've signed a 20-year agreement with Northlands Power to guarantee a price of natural gas, to guarantee the profits to Northlands Power, which is an Ontario company. So, Mr. Speaker, that's just one of the examples where this government has shown a clear disregard for the people of this province and what's been built in this province over an outside company. And that's good business to them.

Mr. Speaker, did you also know that taxpayers have paid for the infrastructure to run high-speed Internet into rural Saskatchewan through SaskTel, but this government has issued a stop-sell notice to SaskTel so that they can't sell products at the end of that infrastructure? It's contracted out. So, Mr. Speaker, we pay for the infrastructure, and someone else makes the profit. And these people figure that's good business, Mr. Speaker. It's kind of taking us all for a ride.

Mr. Speaker, did you also know that SaskTel has contracted out a number of services? Teleconferencing operator services, and they've also sold off many profitable arms of business — Hospitality Network, DirectWest Canada, Ag Dealer — and that Corrections' phone service now comes through a Texas company. Mr. Speaker, I would guess that many Saskatchewan residents don't realize this, that our Crown corporations are being dismantled in front of us.

And it's similar to other ministries, Mr. Speaker. Highways depots are being shut down in small towns in rural Saskatchewan, Lucky Lake for one. There are others, Mr. Speaker. SaskPower offices are closed in rural communities. But yet these folks stand, these government members stand and talk about being huge supporters of rural Saskatchewan, and

like they have the vote wrapped up. But they know that they have ignored rural Saskatchewan — SaskPower offices, Highways depots, and there are others, Mr. Speaker, and other examples. So, Mr. Speaker, while we may look at this budget and say, lots of money going lots of places, there are many questions that are remaining.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues raised the issue of how the money is being spent and how the money is being accounted for. And when we were talking about the whole debate about potash revenue and the review of potash revenue, Mr. Speaker, I went into the budget books to find out what the actual price of potash had been in a variety of different years. But, Mr. Speaker, because this government uses kind of a sliding scale in many of its charts, there is no information in budget books for the actual price in 2007 of potash. So, Mr. Speaker, it makes me start to wonder, where else is this being used?

And we see it over and over again where the prime years are used in the calculations, when the prime years are . . . There is no actual price for potash in 2007 in any of the budget documents. And, Mr. Speaker, but scales are changing as we move, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, I can argue with the Minister of Finance after but, Mr. Speaker, I have to say we had the whole discussion about potash royalties, and this has come up over and over again. And if this government truly believes they are so knowledgeable on the business side, I say, baloney.

Mr. Speaker, I was involved in the discussions for the changes to the potash revenue royalties in 2003 and 2005. Mr. Speaker, a great deal of work went into that and a great deal of discussion. And part of it was based on the price of potash at the time, the option of expansion or greenfield mines, and also the length of time it would take the potash companies to recoup their investment into expansions or greenfield mines.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was a fair bit of discussion. And at that time, potash was below \$200 a tonne. And, Mr. Speaker, part of this debate about whether potash royalties need to be reviewed is that potash prices have changed. The industry has changed. In fact members of the industry itself had said, this is the new norm. But this government is quite content to sit back on their laurels. What business . . . Now is this what the member from Yorkton would do with his family business? Oh well, things are fine. We'll just leave it as it is. I don't need to review. Costs have changed; the industry has changed, but he would just sit back. Well maybe his dad runs the business, and he would actually have better sense to review it and look at the actual costs.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's irresponsible for this government not to review for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker. If they're right, it would prove they're right, Mr. Speaker. But if they are incorrect, if they are wrong in their assumptions, it would also show clearly to the people of Saskatchewan which needs to be done. A review is a review. It is not a guarantee of things going one way or another. It is a review of the circumstance and the industry.

Mr. Speaker, now they're all hooting and hollering. You know, look back to your business sense. Maybe step back, get some

advice from someone who is more familiar with business. It is something that would be reviewed on an ongoing basis. It would be normal due diligence in any situation, and it's something that this government needs to do. And, Mr. Speaker, it's something that the people of this province believe needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, there are many questions in this budget, many people that are left outside in the cold in this budget. Mr. Speaker, lots of money being spent but not a lot of thought or vision when it was being spent. So I will not be supporting the budget. I'll be supporting the motion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud and honoured to stand in the Assembly today in support of the budget, *The Saskatchewan Advantage*. I was always proud of the fact that I lived in Saskatchewan where my grandparents immigrated to, but even more so now, as our government makes great strides to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people, creating a better quality of life and more opportunities for all citizens in Saskatchewan.

Firstly I would like to thank the Finance minister and our government for all the thought and work put into the process of fulfilling commitments and reducing debt in one budget. I'd also like to take this opportunity to discuss the positive stories we're hearing in my wonderful constituency and the communities of Saskatchewan Rivers. Also thank you for the continued support of my family and staff at my constituency office.

Mr. Speaker, as I discuss the budget in my speech, the citizens of Saskatchewan will see their concerns addressed and how Saskatchewan is proving itself as an economic leader in comparison to the rest of the country. How this budget addresses the health care demands of Saskatchewan's growing population to improve their quality of life, I will also demonstrate. The health budget includes a 250 million increase to regional health authority base funding for compensation of drugs, medical supplies, operating costs. And our government recognizes that access to physicians and health services, it's a top priority for all the people of Saskatchewan. And I am also very excited that patients in rural and remote areas of the province will soon have the helicopter air medical services, thanks to the work of the good MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from Melfort.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is blessed with an impressive array of natural resources. And one of the most diverse in Canada and the world is right here in Saskatchewan Rivers, the constituency that I represent. Now if you will bear with me, I did some research. In January of 1943, potash was discovered near Radville when Imperial Oil was drilling for oil. The boundaries were unknown, but the researchers concluded that the salt basin on the prairies was vast. Then in the 1940s, the main suppliers of potash salts had been Germany and France. During World War II, supplies were cut off and Canada turned to the United States. But by 1955, thoughts were turning inward to Canada with the idea if potash consumption continued to increase, the vast resources and reserves in Saskatchewan would be of great

strategic value to North America.

Today under our government, the mining industry commands a large role in Canada's economic theatre, and Saskatchewan has taken centre stage. We have the globe's highest grain uranium deposits and 53 per cent of the world's potash resources. Saskatchewan is the largest potash producer in the world, with more than 12.2 billion worth of expansions to existing mines. These have been announced, with the projects scheduled for the completion of 2020. I believe our government's budget will help facilitate and continue this climb upward with more than 400 million of much-needed infrastructure investment.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan also produces a great array of minerals including salt, coal, silica sand, and gold. Saskatchewan has one of the world's largest kimberlite fields, and this kimberlite field is in Saskatchewan Rivers constituency in the Fort à la Corne area . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes.

Shore Gold has announced a positive pre-feasibility study for the Star-Orion South Diamond project located right in Saskatchewan Rivers constituency. Anticipated diamond production of 35 million carats with a 20-year mine life strongly supports the prospect of a world-class diamond mine in Saskatchewan. Close proximity to railroads, electrical power supplies, paved highways, and a skilled labour force contributes to the robust economy of this large-scale diamond project, and this budget will foster a culture of entrepreneurship and growth.

Mining is Saskatchewan's third largest industry after oil and natural gas, and it contributes over 3 billion annually in wages, goods, and taxes, supporting more than 30,500 direct jobs. And some of these are in the North; I think 2,000 of these jobs are in northern Saskatchewan. For every \$1 spent directly on mining creates a positive impact on every sector of Saskatchewan's economy.

There is a two point million increase in capital expansion for the benefit of this industry and research institutions that our government has committed to. And that's the Saskatchewan advantage, which I'm very proud to say.

Mr. Speaker, this past year was very challenging for many Saskatchewan producers dealing with excess moisture. Our government worked very hard to address the flooding issues facing farmers across Saskatchewan, and this government's budget — thank you to the Agriculture minister — will help protect Saskatchewan producers against the risk of this year's excess moisture.

The Government of Saskatchewan increased its agriculture budget by 32 million to 418 million for the 2011-12 budget. So producers can be assured that in the upcoming growing season, the government will stand behind them. And by implementing phase 2 of its education property tax reduction plan, the education tax rate will be reduced by 81 per cent on agricultural land. This is the largest education tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history.

The provincial government also introduced the Saskatchewan renewable diesel program, which includes a five-year incentive providing 13 cents per litre for renewable diesel produced and sold in Saskatchewan. This government's budget will also

include 1.2 million in funding for the comprehensive pest control program which is so important to rural communities such as Saskatchewan Rivers constituency. Livestock producers and towns and villages have told me that they're very pleased that this program is there.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, another positive thing that has happened in the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers is the sale of the Prince Albert pulp mill by Domtar to Paper Excellence, and this was really great news to the people of Prince Albert and area. It was warmly embraced by Saskatchewan Rivers constituents. And thank you to the government for providing a positive business climate to enable businesses to enjoy, work, and live in our growing province.

I had the opportunity to speak to the CEO [chief executive officer] of Paper Excellence, and he appeared very eager to get the mill up and running and to work with our government and the people of the area. So thank you to the Minister of Energy. I applaud him for all the input he put in.

Mr. Speaker, with a 4.2 per cent real GDP [gross domestic product] growth forecast in 2011 and a 2.8 per cent in 2012, this budget fosters job creation and economic growth in Saskatchewan. I believe Saskatchewan is coming into its own as an economic leader, and providing more opportunities in the future for our families. My two grandsons, Casey and Reid, will enjoy a great quality of life and educational opportunity.

When I was growing up there were some opportunities, but my son had to leave. And I think all the coyotes left at the same time because now all the children are coming back and the coyotes are coming back, too. And I have been told that that coyote program was good for all the agriculture producers, so thank you again to the Agriculture minister for that past program.

This budget shows increased investments in health care and education — 36.4 million for a 2.3 per cent increase in school operating funding. This budget also shows 2.1 million to develop 500 new child care spaces in 2011-12, and this will increase licensed spaces by 4.1 per cent to a total of 12,700.

I was also very impressed with the Education budget, 6.1 million for planning of nine new school projects across the province.

Mr. Speaker, tourism is a very important element of Saskatchewan Rivers constituency. I see a lot of folks from the south come north, flow north to our beautiful parks and lakes, and my own family for generations has been involved in the tourism industry. In fact, as a little girl, I remember cleaning the litter in the parking lot after a busy weekend at our family business at Candle Lake. And therefore I'm very proud to announce our government initiatives to strengthen and enhance the tourism industry. Saskatchewan is blessed with many beautiful lakes and an abundance of pristine areas to enjoy our environment, and we are indeed fortunate to be living here in Saskatchewan. In order to protect these areas as well as homeowners and their property, 57.5 million has been budgeted for wildlife management; 11 million from Tourism and Parks

for parks capital projects; 1 million for regional parks — a 500,000 increase; and 2.2 million for tourism initiatives.

As I represent the lake areas of Waskesiu, Anglin Lake, Christopher and Emma, Big River, Morin Lake, and Candle Lake just to name a few, I'm extremely proud of our government's initiatives in the budget. There's also 10 million for a new program to upgrade community and tourism access roads.

So, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Rivers constituency remains a very pleasant and wonderful place to live, thanks to my gracious friends and neighbours who are generous and community orientated. They have great capacity to give, to volunteer, and to commit to their workplaces. Local community members have responded very positively to our government's budget, and our list of positive accomplishments and opportunities presented in our communities have made a difference in their lives. I look forward in working with all members present in securing a better future for our province. And people are also telling me it brings a welcome tax relief to rural communities and especially in Saskatchewan Rivers constituency where there are eight RMs [rural municipality].

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, this budget is about building on our Saskatchewan advantage. It's about our abundant natural resources, our sense of community, and our unique lifestyle. This budget is about making life more affordable for all and the opportunities that our economic growth will create for all Saskatchewan citizens — newcomers, First Nation communities, rural and urban areas, farmers, young families, and seniors and business owners.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I support, that's why I'm in favour of *The Saskatchewan Advantage* budget, and I will not be supporting the opposition amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin my comments on this budget tonight by recognizing and thanking my family for their support over many years that I've been in here now and it seems like . . . My colleagues are helping me along with this. They think it's been a long time too, that I've been here and certainly my family does, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank my parents, Charlie and Verna. I hope they're watching tonight, and I bet they are. My wife, Linda, always supportive; my daughters Stephanie and Alison living in Ottawa. They made their sacrifices to the political life some years ago and now they have successful careers of their own, and Stephanie has my grandson, Stewart, who's nearly five. My son, Lee, and his new wife, Jessica, and their baby daughter, my beautiful little granddaughter, Josie Claire. Josie can't talk yet. She's only one but I know that she wants to see more of grandpa, too. I can tell. Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank my constituents, the hard-working people of Thunder Creek, for trusting me to represent them in this great institution. And it's a responsibility that I take very seriously, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP members opposite, they're opposition members, Mr. Speaker, and they feel like they have to oppose things. This is a

budget that I am very proud of. I've been a political junkie since I was a teenager, Mr. Speaker, and I've watched these sorts of things. I've been involved in elections since I was 20 years old. I pay attention to these things. This is absolutely the best budget I have ever seen federally or provincially, Mr. Speaker. I know that they as opposition members, they feel it's their duty and responsibility to oppose and that's what they're doing to the very best of their ability, Mr. Speaker, and I get that. But here are some things that other provincial leaders have been saying about this budget, Mr. Speaker.

The province of Saskatchewan is projecting a \$383 million surplus in the General Revenue Fund in fiscal year 2011-12, a rare achievement in a year that will see most provinces digging their way out of deficit. Excluding fund transfers, the surplus sits at \$115 million or about point two per cent of GDP, still a tall accomplishment in this challenging fiscal environment.

And this from Robert Kavcic, economist with the Bank of Montreal.

"This is a real balanced budget. Even the auditor would agree with that." Stefani Langenegger, CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] radio.

You're paying down debt. You really are, to the tune of \$325 million. You're basically giving 200 million in tax cuts that's going directly to go to the poorest of the poor and to everybody, of course the working poor anyway. And you're basically also having a balanced and a real balanced budget, not a pretend balance, but where you actually are taking in more money than you're spending. So there's actually a really good solid bottom line to this [Murray Mandryk].

"I'm a very happy man. I think this is a decent budget." This from Steve McLellan, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce.

Brian Martynook, executive director, Moose Jaw & District Chamber, said this. Martynook told the *Times Herald* the provincial budget which Finance minister Ken Krawetz released in the legislature on Wednesday has something for everybody. For business, he said, tax cuts would definitely be beneficial.

"That kind of gives tax competitiveness for small business," Martynook said, adding such tax reduction should encourage entrepreneurs and risk takers to come to Moose Jaw for their business ventures.

The budget stays on course by building on our competitive business advantages while recognizing the need to make strategic investment in our most valuable resource — our people. A good balance for the future. I like it [says Tim LeClair, CEO, Saskatoon Regional Economic Development].

Dr. Stewart McMillan said the budget was good news for cancer patients. The infusion of cash will pay for more bone marrow transplants, colorectal screening, and cancer treatments.

"This government has put its money where its mouth is,"

said Guy Lonechild, chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. “This is an opportunity for us to start doing much-needed work, to roll up our sleeves and start improving educational outcomes for First Nations people including early childhood development, K to 12 post-secondary education.”

Chief Guy Lonechild goes on to say this is an important first step forward:

This budget allows for this work to come in within the next 12 months. So we are actually quite happy with it. The government is providing money so universities and colleges don't have to raise tuition just to balance the books.

“Across the country we see other universities are suffering, but in Saskatchewan there are still positive investments”, says Brett Fairbairn, U of S [University of Saskatchewan] provost and vice-president of academics. “We are fortunate to be in a province that is still investing in post-secondary education.”

“The support is important for producers and the non-producing public as well,” said Greg Marshall, APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] president. And he goes on to say, “I'm glad to see the initiative to increase funding to research agricultural research. It's been hurting for a lot of years.”

Keri McFadden, CEO, Institute of Chartered Accountants said, “No matter who the government is, we want to see a summary financial statements report. The GRF is important too, but showing the surplus in both areas is a huge step. It's great to see that we have a true surplus.”

“Small-business owners like this budget on a number of fronts,” said Marilyn Braun-Pollon. Saskatchewan vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. “One, that it's balanced; the fact that we are paying down debt and their tax cut priority is beginning to be addressed with the retention in the small-business tax — a reduction in the small business tax rate from 4.5 per cent to 2 per cent.”

Deb Davies, Foster Families Association, said, “The children and youth agenda tells me that the government is prioritizing our families, and that is where we need to be focusing our efforts — on strengthening families.”

I'm not reading all of these — there are so many — but I'm trying to hit the high spots, Mr. Speaker. “Raising a family is not a cheap thing, and so by having those increases to resources for foster children and foster parents, I think it's a good day.”

“Being a former foster child myself, growing up in the system, I know it's really important to have those resources to ensure that Métis children are given the best opportunity to succeed.” This from Robert Doucette, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Colin Craig of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said:

When you increase the basic personal exemption, virtually all taxpayers save money, so that's good news. We're pleased to see that there's significant tax relief in

there for individuals in terms of personal income taxes. There's a small-business tax reduction, there's property tax reductions. I mean those are very good signs. What's also good to see is that the debt is going down.

Dave Marit from SARM said:

The big one we saw of course was the education property tax reduction. It's huge to our organization and to farmers and ranchers in rural Saskatchewan, so that's significant. The revenue-sharing piece that we saw going to a full 1 per cent by the province is very, very huge for rural municipalities.

Certainly from a health care system point of view, it's a good budget. There are significant new resources going into the budget. We've got an increase over 9 per cent for Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, so that not only lets us keep doing what we're doing, the services and programs we've got already, it actually also allows us to expand in some areas too [this from Dwight Nelson, president and CEO, Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region].

[20:15]

“There were 30 new protection workers added. Again, that will I think help to try to make sure there is better casework and help, hopefully, to find ways to support parents to have the opportunity to keep the children in their own homes,” according to Bob Pringle, Children's Advocate.

John Hopkins, Regina Chamber of Commerce, said:

There's a lot of things for a lot of different people, whether it's corporate tax breaks or income tax breaks or property tax changes. There's a lot of different things that business people like as well as other people will like. I think that in any previous year, any budget that I've been involved in, if you had all of these different types of changes in one budget, it would really be something. So this is a pretty historic budget that way.

John Hopkins, Regina Chamber of Commerce.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. We have many, many more endorsements. My point is that leaders around this province agree that this is a great budget. Only the NDP have to try to attempt to cast a dark cloud over it for their own political gain and perhaps their own political survival, Mr. Speaker.

This is our fourth budget, Mr. Speaker, and the economic indicators show that we're on the right track. Mr. Speaker, these economic indicators would not be as positive as they are if our spending priorities were wrong. So I want to deal a little bit with the economic indicators, Mr. Speaker, and again I'll just hit the high spots with them, but they are a direct result of the priority spending of a government. And ours are very positive indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Among the economic indicators, Mr. Speaker, our population is now at an all-time high, over 1.05 million people. It's grown by nearly 16,000 people in the past year, making Saskatchewan the fastest growing province in Canada.

New employment numbers show that 515,700 people were employed in February, the second highest level of employment on record for the month of February. Full-time jobs were up by 2,400. Private sector jobs overall increased by 5,200, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's unemployment rate, seasonally unadjusted, now stands at 6.1 per cent, the third lowest rate in Canada and well below the national rate of 8 per cent. The seasonally adjusted rate is 5.7 per cent, the second lowest in Canada, tied with Alberta and well above the national rate of 7.8 per cent. Well below, I should say.

The value of building permits issued in Saskatchewan increased in January 2011 by 95.6 per cent compared to January 2010, the highest percentage increase among the provinces. Nationally, building permits were down 3.5 per cent. Residential building permits in Saskatchewan were up by 76.7 per cent between January 2010 and January 2011, ranked first among the provinces, while non-residential permits were up an astonishing 110.6 per cent during the same period. In February 2011, housing starts in Saskatchewan's urban centres were up by 115 per cent compared to February 2010. There were decreases in eight provinces in this period, and the national average was down 7 per cent.

RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] estimates Saskatchewan's economy grew by 4.5 per cent in 2010, the second highest rate of economic growth in the country in that year. RBC is also forecasting growth rates of 4.9 per cent and 5.3 per cent for 2011 and 2012 respectively, the highest rates of economic growth among the provinces in both years. RBC expects employment to grow by more than 2 per cent each year on average or by about 10,000 jobs in 2011 and 12,000 in 2012. The Conference Board is forecasting that Saskatchewan will lead the country with growth rates of 3.9 per cent and 4.5 per cent in 2011 and 2012 respectively. TD [Toronto Dominion] Bank forecasts Saskatchewan's economy to grow by 4.3 per cent and 3 per cent in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

In January 2011 compared to January 2010, manufacturing shipments in Saskatchewan increased by 6.3 per cent. In January 2011, new motor vehicle sales in Saskatchewan increased by 4 per cent, 4.6 per cent compared to January 2010, the fourth highest percentage increase in Canada. In 2010, sales were up 6 per cent to 47,601 vehicles compared to '09. Wholesale trade in Saskatchewan increased by 22.5 per cent between January 2010 and January 2011. In January 2011 compared to January 2010, retail sales were up 5.7 per cent. Saskatchewan ranked first in percentage growth among the provinces. In 2010, retail trade increased by 2.7 per cent compared to '09.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous other economic indicators that support our spending priorities over the first three and a half years of our government, Mr. Speaker. But running government in a way that results in a successful economy isn't the goal in itself, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of our province's economic success simply because that creates the revenue for government that can be used to build roads, schools, hospitals, provide long-term care to those who need it, and much more money for social programs, education, and health care. Because of Saskatchewan's economic success in the last four years, we've been able to, in all of those areas . . . to a much greater extent in our first four years than the NDP ever did in the last 16 years

that they were in government.

Some of the key areas that this government goes to improve the lives of Saskatchewan people are: the budget helps to define the Saskatchewan advantage. It builds on the quality of life and the sense of community that the province has always had by creating the conditions for further economic growth and more opportunities in the future. It does this through further tax reductions, enhanced programs in health, education, social services, along with debt reduction and balanced budgets.

The budget strengthens the foundations for the future by reducing debt by another \$325 million, Mr. Speaker. While other jurisdictions see debt rising with deficit budgets, Saskatchewan's debt and interest payments are falling. The budget keeps government promises by fulfilling commitments on education property tax reductions and municipal revenue sharing. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it fulfills commitments on property tax reductions made by premiers as far back as Tommy Douglas in 1945. It fosters job creation and economic growth by cutting the small-business tax by more than half, from 4.5 per cent to 2 per cent. It makes life easier for families by increasing the total tax exemption to a family of four by \$3,000 through raising the basic personal exemption by \$1,000 and the deductions for dependent children by \$500.

The budget furthers the innovation agenda with the new investments in nuclear research, by investing in agricultural research and development, and by supporting both the Canadian Light Source and the Saskatchewan Research Council and promoting a nuclear research agenda.

The budget also innovates on social policy with a new approach to tackling child welfare issues, introducing a cross-ministry approach to provide a clearer focus on the child. Saskatchewan is coming into its own as an economic leader in comparison with other Canadian jurisdictions. We are no longer next year country. We will become this year country.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to . . . There are many areas that I could talk about specifically with regards to this budget, but I'd like . . . Agriculture is my first economic love, if you can say it that way, Mr. Speaker. So I'd like to talk a little bit about our budget's record in agriculture and congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture on the measures that this budget takes for agriculture.

Record crop insurance coverage, Mr. Speaker, and funding in the 2011-12 ag budget will help protect Saskatchewan producers against risks such as excess moisture. The government has increased its agricultural budget by \$32 million to \$418 million in 2011-2012. This is the second highest budget ever announced in the province's history, next only to our own budgets of 2009-2010. More than three-quarters of this year's budget will fully fund business risk management programs including crop insurance, AgriStability, and AgriInvest.

Our government will be leaving more money in the hands of Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers by implementing phase 2 of its education property tax reduction plan which will reduce education property tax rates by 80 per cent on agricultural land compared to 2007. This is the largest education tax reduction in the province's history. This year the mill rate will be reduced

from 7.08 to 3.91 on agricultural land.

The 2011-12 agricultural budget also includes expanded agricultural extension services with the opening of seven new satellite offices in Meadow Lake, Lloydminster, Assiniboia, Moosomin, Estevan, Shaunavon, and Wadena. This is a two-year pilot project to replace I think it was 22 such facilities closed by the previous NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

Our government will continue to provide funding for the Crown land sale program, the wildlife damage compensation program, the gopher control rebate program, irrigation infrastructure, the farm and ranch water infrastructure program, the farm business development initiative, and other programs that benefit producers.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about highways and health and social services and education, but my time is drawing to a close. And so, Mr. Speaker, I'll proudly, I'll very proudly support this budget, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be supporting the opposition amendment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased tonight to rise and add some of my own thoughts to the budget debate. I want to thank my family first for allowing me to be here for almost 13 years now. And I certainly want to thank the people of Eastview for also doing me that honour of putting me here for 13 years. And I'm hoping to have several more, courtesy of those constituents.

I also want to thank my constituency assistant, April Anderson, who does such wonderful work in the constituency office and serves both myself and the people of Eastview and actually the people of the province in an exemplary manner. I also want to thank the executive of Saskatoon Eastview for helping me do all the things that I do and stay here too.

I have some general comments on the budget. I really would like to . . . I've listened to several of my colleagues speak and several of the opposition speak, and there are some things that jump out at me. I know people have focused on basically their, really, areas of interest.

And I did hear a lot of backslapping congratulations going on from the Sask Party members who spoke, but I don't see anybody congratulating the Finance minister for the things and the people who did not get anything from this budget. And those are, from top of my mind, there's seniors. There's not a single mention of seniors, nothing for any of their issues.

I know there's been a very strong lobby over the years to have seniors' centres open in rural Saskatchewan. It's a very small price to pay to keep recreational centres open so that seniors have someplace to gather and someplace to have even some health programs delivered. It keeps them independent, keeps them out and about, and does a lot of things for their mental health and physical health and keeps them out of long-term care and hospitals. A small price to pay, and that's been denied every single year. And still nothing in this budget for seniors — nothing for seniors' housing, nothing for seniors in the drug

plan, nothing for seniors, period. I don't see any mention of the word seniors, so I think that the seniors of this province — and there are many — will certainly be looking at this budget wondering what happened to their interests.

There is nothing in this budget to talk about renters, the difficulties they are facing over the last several years with the market-driven economy that sees their rent, or has seen their rents increase astronomically compared to what their paycheques have increased, which brings me to also another group of people who had nothing in this budget, and that's minimum wage earners. And they are certainly suffering, with food costs going up, gas costs going up, utility costs going up, and certainly not their wages.

[20:30]

There's no real incentives for new home buyers, new homeowners, people trying to get into the market. I know they're all excited about some announcement that the minister made today — that obviously was a rehash of the announcement from last year, so I don't think there's going to be a lot of excitement out in the community with this.

I think there's certainly a lot of people interested in recruitment and retention of doctors, and the medical students that were here today were really interested in hearing about the contract negotiations for PAIRS, the Professional Association of Internes and Residents, who have brought their issues to the legislature and to the minister's attention, to the Premier's attention, and frankly can't figure out why anybody would want to milk every single last iota of bad feeling from these negotiations with these doctors before a settlement. I mean you have to reach a settlement at some point, but make sure you get every single bad feeling that you can possibly get from these prospective doctors that you seem to say you want to stay here in Saskatchewan but do nothing to actually demonstrate that you do.

And this isn't me talking. These are the residents and interns who have spoken to me and have spoken to the minister. He's heard it. He's seen it in writing. It's not news to him. But I don't understand it, and neither do they. What's the stall, and what is to be gained by keeping these professionals without a contract and showing them such disrespect that they continue to think that Saskatchewan doesn't want them?

So whatever the minister says when he stands in his place . . . And the people in the gallery and the people watching, the doctors watching, they certainly understand the arrogance and the disrespect from the minister and have said so. I've seen the emails going back and forth. So I don't think the minister has actually . . . I don't think he's heard it. I think he's paying as much attention to his emails as the minister for Post-Secondary Education does.

There's also 3,000 health sciences professionals who have a wide variety of occupations in the health system. They too are without a contract. And SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations], the government's bargaining agent, is putting advertisements on the radio and on TV and out in the community in their workplaces about the bargaining that . . . It's unheard of. I've never heard of this being allowed.

This is what Bill 6 gave the employer the right to do, which is basically intimidate the employees. And I think . . . I don't know how a government thinks they're going to run a health system when they have angered every single person who works in it, every single person who works in it. The CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees], the SEIU [Service Employees International Union], the SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] contracts . . . Just because they were settled for 9 per cent doesn't mean those 25,000 people are happy. They are not happy. The 3,000 health sciences are not happy. The doctors are not happy.

So I think there's every single health worker in . . . I've been in so many workplaces since last summer that these people are talking about how unhappy they are in their workplaces, how unhappy they are with the way the government has treated them. And certainly they settled the contracts because they were tired of toxic bargaining. They were tired of the toxic bargaining, the conditions that they were in. So they've settled, but there's another date coming in all of their minds and that's November 7th. And every one of them is watching.

And when I talked about being out in rural Saskatchewan on a health tour — I know I've mentioned this before that my colleague from Fairview and I went out in a fairly extensive tour of rural Saskatchewan, 55 communities, and we're still going to more — we saw probably 75 or more health facilities since we saw two, three, and four, sometimes that many in one community. We mostly targeted going to visit long-term care facilities and certainly health centres and small hospitals in communities.

We visited many communities who are really, really unhappy with this government who has done nothing to help them with their doctor recruitment. None of them have seen any benefit from the physician recruitment agency. The physician recruitment CEO was in Wakaw at the public meeting, sat on his hands. There was nothing to offer the community of Wakaw which now sees their hospital closed for acute emergency services.

And Wakaw's not the only one. There's Neilburg has lost their ambulance service. They only have it on just a month-to-month basis. Lestock, Cudworth, Kindersley . . . Kindersley's just on the brink of losing their services as well. Spiritwood hospital closed. Leader Hospital closed. Big River hospital closed. And the Sask Party, including the minister, talk a lot about the 51 hospitals that were impacted, 51 in the early '90s. I visited many of those communities. Those hospitals are now special care homes, many of them with attached health centres.

But my question would be to those people on the Sask Party side who talk about this: you haven't reopened a single one of them, so what on earth is your plan for those 52 places or 51 places? You've done nothing to, nothing to change any of those circumstances, and you're adding to the total now with Wakaw and Spiritwood and Big River and Leader, and not doing anything to continue to keep communities like Kindersley and Shaunavon with their services open. I'm getting emails talking about Shaunavon, having people turned away from emergency services in Shaunavon. And it just goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

In our tour, my colleague from Fairview and I found

communities telling us that they feel rural people are paying for health care twice. They pay with the PST and then they pay with health levies or using their municipal tax base to fund doctor clinics and incentives for doctors including homes and cars and bonuses and guarantees of wages. They understand that they're paying twice. That's what they told us. And they don't like that. They don't see any reason why they have to pay for something that the rest of the province takes out of the General Revenue Fund and is funded by the PST.

There's more in rural Saskatchewan. There's more unhappiness than I think the members opposite realize, because most places we went to told us that none of them return the phone calls or meet with people that we were talking to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They do not. They do not. They said without a doubt and without an exception, Mr. Speaker, that they cannot talk to their MLAs. I shouldn't say . . . There's one exception. They did say that the member from Shellbrook met with them, and look what happened to him.

Mr. Speaker, there's certainly a lack of equity in the budget for the Catholic school system. We've met with the Catholic school system, with parents. There is a funding gap in the school system that is really disadvantaging separate school children as compared to their public school counterparts. And even the comments after the budget from education, from the school boards, talked about this budget being a status quo budget from two years ago.

So it does nothing to address the increased enrolment, the enrolment of immigrant children. It does nothing to, nothing to address the capital issues. How are our education systems, how are our systems supposed to, our school districts supposed to fund capital? How are they supposed to build schools? They used to have an ability to tax, and now they have nothing, so they have to rely on the provincial government. We heard nothing about changing the split there for funding. It's still 65/35 I don't know how they're expected to raise their 35 per cent.

And while I'm talking about the split in infrastructure, I think we should talk again about Amicus, because most communities that we visited this summer that were scheduled or waiting to see construction on long-term care facilities didn't have a clue that this new funding formula was out there. They weren't being offered it, and they were quite angry that they weren't being offered it. So the Minister now goes to 80/20 and thinks that that should make these communities feel better. I really don't think that they're going to buy that when Saskatoon got 100 per cent funding.

So I don't think that these communities . . . They understand it now and they're certainly getting the information. I know one of the members from the Sask Party thought we were out there scaring people, but we were scaring people with the truth. And that's certainly, that's certainly not something that they thought was scary. They actually really appreciated hearing the real story.

And it's interesting also I think when my colleague from . . . The Finance critic talked about, "boom for whom?" All these people that I've mentioned that did not get anything in the budget. What about mental health? I mean there was a whole

group of people here talking about mental health and the lack of services. The minister talked about his commitment. The budget came down; nothing in the budget. Nothing for mental health services and nothing for the construction of the hospital in North Battleford that has been long awaited. Many, many people are extremely disappointed in that. There is no money for any construction there.

In fact, there's no money actually, Mr. Speaker, anywhere in the budget for any health infrastructure, which I find interesting. There's no money for capital in the health budget. There's promises made for long-term care facilities — 13 that we all remember — and that money's been in and out, as many other things have been. But I don't see it now in the budget, so I don't know what those communities are being told, where they're supposed to find that money from.

I don't see any money to increase health research, and that's right in the health estimates budget on page 88. Health research is status quo. Health Quality Council is status quo. Which begs the question: where's the MS [multiple sclerosis] funding coming from? The Health Quality Council is leading the request for proposals for the MS research project that the Premier announced ad hoc on John Gormley, and now there's nothing in the budget. So the people . . . the multiple sclerosis community is looking for, where is that money going to come from and what is the commitment to that research project when and if it comes? So that is certainly missing in the budget. I think long-term care obviously is missing when we're talking about no money for capital.

When I was talking about debunking the myth, I do want to mention in my remarks about debunking the myth of the debt decreasing. Because on page 60 of the Sask Party's own budget document it says, "Public debt is forecast to increase by \$375.9 million during 2010-11 and increase by an additional \$485.3 million in 2011-12." I don't know how anybody can think that that debt is decreasing when that's almost a billion dollars of an increase, as admitted to in the budget summary, Sask Party budget summary.

So I'm not exactly sure what the public is thinking when they're getting this message. They're hearing about the debt being decreased and then they can read in the budget book that it's increasing, quite blatantly saying so. And yet to go on radio, TV, any other kind of messaging and give a message out that isn't the same as that, I think that's just unethical. I don't understand how you can do that to people in the province and then keep your credibility.

I think there is a real — and I've said this before and I think it probably was my response to the Throne Speech — a real contempt for democracy. I think people in the Sask Party believe that the public doesn't need to know, doesn't have to know, and certainly they don't think they should be told everything. They think that everything should go as they predict or want. It's like the Premier is Harper light or mini-Harper. I know Mr. Harper, the Prime Minister, doesn't like to talk to people, doesn't like to tell people things. I don't think that this government does either.

And I just look back at the electoral officer fiasco, and here we are in another one with Bill 160. We're in another one with ID

[identification], photo ID for elections. It just is a pattern that, I think, people really will get quite soon. I mean, it is only three and a half years and I think people are already seeing the cracks in this government and the things that they really don't like. And I know that they're riding high . . . The Sask Party members are riding high on polls, and I like to see them up on their high horse because it's a long fall down and we're all looking forward to that.

I think that when the member from Cannington talked to the community in Wawota about highways or health, I think that's a community, Wawota is a community that's really indicative of how people are really angry about a decision. And again, my comment about the minister just milking every single ounce of bad feeling they possibly could get out of a community of Wawota — \$110,000 to keep those beds open. And yet all these expenditures we hear, frivolous expenditures in the regional college, in other places that we see, it doesn't really matter. That money can be spent. But in Wawota \$110,000 could not be found to keep five beds open in long-term care. There were sad stories at the community meetings I've been at about seniors who had to leave their family and their communities, very sad stories, and it was over \$110,000.

And the Sun Country Health District has been shown to be extremely inept, and yet the minister keeps them, and nobody can understand why they're still there. The Provincial Auditor has pointed out problems. The chief financial officer had to be fired. The CEO had to be fired, but the board remains. And the minister has the authority to take that board out. They were appointed by the minister in order in council. They serve at the pleasure of the minister, and the minister has the authority to dissolve the board.

And certainly there has been every indication that this board needs to be dissolved. It has lost the confidence of the community. Every meeting I've been to, and now it's been over 1,000 people in town hall meetings that just continue, continue to say that. They have lost their confidence in the board. They're certainly saying now they've lost their confidence in the minister. They've said publicly they've lost their confidence in their MLAs. And I think that they understand now that the final decision is the minister's and the Premier's. They're not blaming the health board, but the health board has proven to be inept. They're not competent to deal with the problems that they have, and the minister needs to step in and fix that.

[20:45]

Other communities are watching the Wawota issue and are saying, you know, we don't care for some of the decisions that are made in our area too. And Wawota, I think, is empowering people which I think the minister . . . I don't think the minister really intended that to happen. But it's an example of how people in communities can determine their own fate and how they really do not tolerate being used this way, spoken to this way — not listened to, not paid attention to, and basically their health needs, with five long-term care beds, totally disregarded.

I know the last town hall meeting I was at, a doctor from Moosomin was speaking, and he talked about the impact on the Moosomin Hospital with the closure of the five beds in Wawota. He also talked about the impact in Broadview which

is another health district. So there are consequences to decisions that are taken, and those consequences are not . . . I mean, I don't see how the minister or this government ever looks at cause and effect. And Wawota is a really good example of totally ignoring what will happen if you do certain things and then digging your heels in and absolutely refusing to admit a mistake was made and to make amends in the community.

And that's the same attitude that is at the bargaining table. It's the same attitude that's there with the doctors and Health Sciences and all these . . . And people do not like to be treated that way. It does remind me of the federal government and Mr. Harper. And I think it's, well it's a pretty sad . . . It's a very, very sad substitute for that sort of strength. But the Premier's trying and his ministers are trying too. But I don't think people really like being treated that way.

And I don't understand why the government would want to see that for such a small amount of money to fix some of these things. We're a big . . . I mean \$5.1 million for beer and nothing for Wawota? I think people are . . . they can connect the dots. And there's nothing for housing. Five-point something for beer and less for housing. I don't think people really like that. And I think the Sask Party has misjudged this something for everybody. Because there's a long list that I've mentioned, that there's people that aren't getting the boom in this, people who do understand there's nothing in this budget.

I haven't even talked about . . . I heard somebody talking about the STARS and the helicopter. We have not got our road ambulance system up and running properly. The government, under the NDP, commissioned a study. Then the Sask Party commissioned a study. All those recommendations, none of them have been funded and implemented. And that's the Sask Party's own study. Neither one of those studies recommended a helicopter. So I can only think that the helicopter is to put some glitzy photo op out there because the \$5 million isn't even going to get you a helicopter. And by all accounts, it's \$17 million to run a helicopter every year. And we don't have road ambulance, and road ambulance is a connector to if you do have a helicopter. So I'm telling people, don't be lulled into thinking that a helicopter's going to save your services in rural Saskatchewan. You need a road ambulance system, and two reports have said so. So I can only imagine that the STARS announcement is basically to get a good photo op.

And it's interesting when you talk about the STAR system in Alberta, the money that they raise to run that, the public or the foundation part that isn't funded by the government is raised in fundraisers like our hospital foundations do. So the hospital foundations in Saskatchewan are quite upset that there is going to be another ask for public money or corporation money, and they have not been consulted. And they have actually talked to me. Nobody has spoken to them about what this means to their ability to raise money in their hospital foundations. So that has certainly not been mentioned at all in any STARS talk.

And I do think that people do understand that this is just an announcement to make it look good in rural Saskatchewan and make some sort of feel-good band-aid go on there. Because if you don't have the road ambulance fixed, it isn't going to help to put a helicopter in. And both reports that were commissioned by both governments, ours and now theirs, say exactly the same

thing. So I don't think people in rural Saskatchewan are going to buy that either. They understand they need an ambulance in Neilburg. They need an ambulance in Cudworth. They need an ambulance in Lestock. They need one around Wakaw. They need their hospitals open. They need them open in Leader and Wakaw and Big River and Spiritwood. They understand that. And I don't think telling people that they're going to get a helicopter for \$17 million a year is going to do it. It certainly wasn't the talk around town when we were out and about last summer and fall.

And I know that there are so many other things in the budget. I mean, I focused on health because health is sort of my focus. But there are so many other things that are missing in the budget — talk about a potash review, a royalty review, those sorts of things that are scoffed at by the Sask Party. People in Saskatchewan think that that's fair, a royalty review. One penny more, and people think, okay, you know, we should look at this. We haven't looked at it for 10 years. What's wrong with that?

And to have their ideas categorized by the Premier as crazy, they don't like that either. I think people want to be able to talk about things, and talk about them free from being labelled crazy. There's lots of things people in this province came up with that came into the policy review of the New Democratic Party that weren't from party members, that were from the general public, from organizations representing special interests of various parts of society that don't have a tie to the party. And they wanted to think that their ideas would make a difference. They didn't think that they were crazy at all. But they certainly don't like to see the Premier or hear the Premier call them crazy.

And I know that when we were out in many of the places that we visited, people were certainly not happy. They were really excited about us coming. They thought that they had . . . They were telling us that they don't get a lot of attention. So it made me wonder about . . . Most of the places we visited were represented by Sask Party MLAs. And it was pretty much taken for granted, I think, that the vote out there is theirs.

Because there are these irritants going on out there that this budget is not going to address because . . . I listed a whole bunch of people that the boom is not for and that there isn't a congratulatory pat on the back for the Minister of Finance for. Those people — and there's a lot of them; this covers a lot of people that are not being affected positively by this budget — those people get to vote in November, and those people are watching. And they understand this is an election budget, but it didn't buy their vote. It might have bought somebody's, but it isn't going to buy theirs.

So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly, I could have talked about many other things. My focus was pretty narrow talking about health, but we will have lots of other opportunity to talk about especially things in the health budget in estimates, which I look forward to. And I will not be voting for the main motion. I will be supporting the amendment of the minister, the critic for Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand today this evening and speak on the budget. And that was a fun budget, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday was a fun day to be able to hear all the good things that came through.

But, Mr. Speaker, first thing I would like to do is, is I would be in remiss if I didn't take time to mention my wife, Terry. You know she has to manage our household affairs without me being around for most of the time, especially, especially, Mr. Speaker, this past month as we've seen a large amount of snow. Now Terry refuses to use a snow blower. Instead she uses a shovel. But on the bright side, Mr. Speaker, she's staying in pretty good shape. Of course I have cautioned her not to overexert herself, dress properly, and don't go longer than 20 minutes, etc, and I'm sure she's grateful for my helpful advice.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my CAs [constituency assistant] for their diligent work. Shelley, Cindy and Charlene do an excellent job of running the office. Although, Mr. Speaker, I have to say our office is being rather quiet as of late. I take that to mean that most of our constituents agrees with or feels that this government is moving in the right direction. You know, Mr. Speaker, I think our constituency . . . the Saskatchewan advantage. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my constituents for giving me the responsibility and opportunity to represent them for the past three and a half years. It has indeed been a privilege, and I hope to renew my contract on November the 7th.

And speaking of November the 7th, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there's going to be an election at that time. We also know that the Saskatchewan Party will come out with a platform with what we intend to do if the people of Saskatchewan will extend our mandate. But we'll be campaigning differently this time. We're going to go on our record. If you like the new Saskatchewan, if you like prosperity and growth, if you like your children and grandchildren working in their home province, if you like better roads, if you like lower taxes, if you like more doctors, nurses, and shorter wait times, if you like to live in a have province that you can go elsewhere and brag about, then I think the Saskatchewan Party is the choice.

You know, if you kind of like the old way, if you really don't like to manage your affairs, want Big Brother to tell what's best for you, if you don't care about the roads because you don't travel too far and your kids live too far away to come and visit very often, if you don't care about health care because you're going to die sometime anyway, if you feel in your heart capitalism and profit are the root of all evil, well then I think you might want to consider voting for the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this indeed has been a great budget for the people of Saskatchewan. It basically covers all people in the province, and I commend the Finance minister for doing an outstanding job on his first kick at the cat. I'm sorry for any feline lovers out in the audience, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just a few of the items from the budget. Fulfilling commitments on education property tax reductions. Mr. Speaker, the farmers of Carrot River Valley are elated. This was talked about for years by the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] and the NDP. But you know

something? They just never got around to it. This government did.

Also the municipal revenue sharing. This gives our towns, cities, and RMs a stable income and takes away the uncertainty and ad hoc payments of the previous administration. This, Mr. Speaker, is a Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also is about lowering taxes. Just this weekend, I had a glowing response from a small-business owner. This tax is being cut from four and a half per cent to 2 per cent — more than half, Mr. Speaker. As my constituent and former, and former NDP supporter said, this is huge. He sees the Saskatchewan advantage, and I know which party he will support next time.

Another one is the personal income tax. Just think, Mr. Speaker, we went from being one of the highest taxed jurisdictions in the country to being the lowest. A family of four will pay no income tax on the first \$45,550. The highest income threshold in Canada. Another Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really stick out is the money spent on our roads. We promised in 2007 to invest up to \$1.8 billion in our roads and highways. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have surpassed that to the tune, with this budget, of \$2.2 billion. This is not just noticed by our own residents, Mr. Speaker, but by the people coming here from other jurisdictions. Saskatchewan highways used to be the laughingstock of Canada. Now the people from Alberta that are moving back here are saying these highways are better than the ones over there, Mr. Speaker.

In Carrot River Valley alone, rebuilds are on Highway No. 35 south of Tisdale, Highway 55 to P.A., plus between Nipawin and Carrot River, Highway 23 south of Carrot River, Highway 3 to Hudson Bay. This can only be achieved with a strong budget and a strong government with a strong vision and a forward-thinking government. The Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how does this happen? How does the Saskatchewan Party keep moving forward? Prudency.

[21:00]

Now I would like to talk a little bit about forestry because it's rather important up in our constituency. We have various different Bills up there. And on November 4th the member from Prince Albert Northcote said, and I quote, "The Premier had no plan for forestry; it went in the tank." Now, Mr. Speaker, under whose watch did the forestry go into the tank? It wasn't under ours. It happened previous to the Saskatchewan Party being in power. Maybe it was those high taxes that drove that forest industry out of Saskatchewan, although let's face it, the forest economy was not in the world's greatest shape at that time.

But when you go back and you think of it, how do we manage to run a good budget? We didn't go out there handing out taxpayers' money to the forestry operations, we let them make their decisions on what should be done. A very good example of this is the recent announcement with Paper Excellence in Prince Albert. Now Paper Excellence is going to buy that mill in Prince Albert and get it running again. And this is a great thing for Prince Albert, but it's also a great thing for all of

Saskatchewan because the people there and the company there will be working and paying taxes. We also said we would let them in on cogeneration. This is a good thing. This is something the previous administration wouldn't do.

Now let's go back over into Carrot River Valley constituency and see how this is going to help them. Now the first mill to start up was the strand board plant owned by Weyerhaeuser in Hudson Bay. Now that plant has already started and it is moving as we speak. On July the 4th, Edgewood lumber is starting up the stud mill in Carrot River. Now that plant will be sending chips over to that mill in Hudson Bay . . . or excuse me, in Prince Albert. Before that, they would have had to send their chips either to Meadow Lake or up to Tolko. We didn't put any money into that. Prudent budgeting.

They also plan on, Edgewood also plans on starting their plywood mill in Hudson Bay on November the 1st. These are all planned start-up dates and they say that they are firm dates.

We didn't put any money into there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We let those companies make their decisions on their own so that they could put money in and run and operate as they saw fit.

This is a new Saskatchewan budget. This is a Saskatchewan that's leading the country in economic growth, the Saskatchewan that is in either first or second place in every category — be it housing starts, employment, tax reduction, in-migration — you name it. This is the new Saskatchewan, not the old Saskatchewan under the NDP. This is a progressive, energetic, invigorating Saskatchewan led by the most popular premier in the country. That's our new Saskatchewan.

Now with our new budget, Saskatchewan now has the lowest personal income tax in all of Canada. And not only that, this budget lowered property tax for homeowners, farmers, businesses. How do we do that, Mr. Speaker? The Saskatchewan Party is different than the NDP, a lot different. Believe it or not, we actually embrace profit. We like to see people and their businesses, their farms, and the labourers move ahead, have a vision for the future, Mr. Speaker. When this happens, you have a self-sustaining economic stimulus plan that keeps on giving.

The Saskatchewan motto is "from many peoples, strength". And this administration, contrary to the previous one, believes in that model. When we have more people in businesses, we have a larger tax base to fix our roads; to maintain our hospitals; to improve our education; and let us never forget, to assist and help the vulnerable, needy, and disadvantaged.

There is a lot of money in this budget put into health care. Our health care is being drastically improved within this province. And I'll talk about Carrot River Valley again, Mr. Speaker: two more beds for dialysis in Tisdale; a 54 per cent increase in physicians in Nipawin, including a paediatrician; increasing the training for physicians and residencies at the U of S, which was just about shut down under the previous administration; increasing nurse training; the recruitment of 850 nurses since the last election — something that that side of the House said never could be done. They never did want to try it because they said, why would you ever set a goal if you didn't think you could achieve it? This government believes in achieving.

Mind you, there was a lot of things they said that this province could never do. We could never sustain more than a million people. Well now what are we at — 1,052,000 and climbing? The largest population in this province, or the largest population this province has ever had.

Even the student population has gone up, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 17 years. And this is really great because my daughter is just finishing off her education degree this spring. That means that my daughter, contrary to what it used to be when they had to move to other provinces, will actually be working, actually be working in this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a great thing to be a have province. I never want to go back to being a have-not province. You know this is a new Saskatchewan. It's not the old Saskatchewan under the NDP. It's a progressive, energetic, invigorating Saskatchewan. I guess I've already said that one before, Mr. Speaker, so I'll continue on. Yes, it actually sounds pretty good. We could say that again. Like I mean, the most popular Premier. Our Premier has a popularity count that is far above the Leader of the Opposition. The fact is the Leader of the Opposition I don't even think gets up as high as his, as his other side there.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP will try as hard as they can to spin this as a poor budget. I said it before, and I'll say it again: they need a new washing machine. The one that they have is unbalanced. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's either the machine or them or perhaps both. Since we've been in government, the debt has been lowered \$3 billion — \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker. How do you spin that as bad? Mr. Speaker, they're out of balance so badly that they're bouncing across the laundry room floor, so out of balance that they think the way to go is to make us be a have-not province. At least that's the way I take it, if you want to go back to equalization.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a testament to the strong, steady, cautious movement forward of the Saskatchewan Party government. I think, I think I can relate the differences to a tragic event way back in 1912. Mr. Speaker, everyone here knows the story of the *Titanic* and its demise. You know, Mr. Speaker, there are similarities, there are similarities with this event and the NDP and also with the Saskatchewan Party.

As the captain of the NDP moves full steam ahead with reckless abandon on his job-killing royalty reassessment of both potash, uranium, oil, so did Captain Smith steam full speed ahead into a known ice field. Now, Mr. Speaker, neither of these captains gave much thought to what their actions might be, what devastating results could occur. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know what happened to the *Titanic*. It ran into an iceberg, split in two, and sank into the abyss with a tremendous loss of life and opportunity, never to rise again.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what is happening to the NDP with their dear leader. He moves forward without thinking of the consequences of his actions, without thinking of the people of Saskatchewan, never wanting to see job growth, population increases, or prosperity. Their leader has but one agenda, and that is due to fail because not only do the good people of Saskatchewan see through him, but even some of his own party also. Remember, the *Titanic* split in two before sinking.

This, Mr. Speaker, is not the end of the story. We know that the good ship . . . [inaudible] . . . came to the rescue of the *Titanic*. Now the . . . Excuse me, I said that wrong, it's the *Carpathia*.

Now the *Carpathia* is similar to the Saskatchewan Party. Captain Rostron was a brave but cautious man, similar to our Premier. He heeded the ice warnings. He knew what the consequences could be. But when it came time for rescue, the good captain came through with valiant effort, saved a number of the *Titanic* passengers. This relates to the Saskatchewan Party. We have a captain and crew that is cautious but steady and strong. This is a party that will deliver the Saskatchewan people safely to port no matter the consequences. Mr. Speaker, this is a Saskatchewan advantage.

I want to talk a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about some of the other things that . . . As we all know, the NDP had their meeting this past weekend, their grandiose meeting, and they had somewhere around 300 promises in their policy document. We don't know what all of them were but, you know, adding them up, adding them up — and this was something that was never done while they were there — when you add it up, it comes to about \$1.5 billion a year.

Now really the only way you're going to do it, see . . . And I can see the member of the opposition shaking his head, shaking his head over there. Well the reason was he didn't add it up, so he doesn't know. The only way that they can get that money is by raising taxes just like the Leader of the Opposition did 17 times back when he was in government. You know, they want to go out there and review all the royalty structure. They want to review it on potash. They want to review it on uranium. They want to review it on oil.

You want to talk about a job-killing monster, and I say uranium, you know, and they don't even have uranium in Mississippi. But I just thought I'd throw that in.

But, you know, what is said in Missinipi to the Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation and what is actually said to the other people down south is a little different. There they say, well no, no, no, we won't we won't touch the uranium royalties. But down here, right on their own television ads it says, yes, we will go after the uranium royalties — a job-killing monster. But if you start adding some of this up . . .

I've got one more thing to say, Mr. Speaker. They, you know, they talk about not raising taxes. The former Finance minister Harry Van Mulligen said after the 2003 election, the NDP doesn't like to talk about tax hikes, doesn't like to talk about tax hikes at election time. Then their very next budget, what did they do? They raised the PST. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's talking out of both sides of your mouth.

[21:15]

You're going to come out and you're going to have all these different policies, and I think what we can do is we can just add some of them up. Now these are just kind of figuring out a few costs of what it would come to per year. Now to reinstate chiropractic care, the annual cost, 10.5 million; allow autism to be covered under individualized funding program, that would cost approximately 63 million; universal free tuition, Mr.

Speaker, another 200 million. Adopting the NDP greenhouse gas immersion targets, cost per year to SaskPower to phase out the coal fire plants, the power plants, unless CCS [carbon capture and storage] technology is used, that's another \$70 million a year. Two plants that would need a retrofit in the power end of it total \$2.5 billion over five years — that's \$500 million a year. Universal child care, \$93 million per year; providing CVA [central vehicle agency] vehicles to CBOs [community-based organization], \$16.5 million a year plus initial capital costs of 36 million not included in the annual total; lowest cost utility bundle, \$94 million per year; resource revenue sharing with First Nations, 1 per cent of PST, \$246 billion per year; spot loss hail coverage, \$70 million per year; the housing program, \$100 million per year annual cost. And this is just a partial cost only — \$1.463 billion per year.

You know, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, this has gotten to the stage of almost being ridiculous. And you're going to do that without raising any taxes? No. What you're going to do is you're going to go back on the resource taxes. You're going to kill the population of Saskatchewan. You're going to start sending people back over to Alberta, back over . . . out to BC [British Columbia], heaven forbid, Ontario, or maybe even worse, Quebec. Like, Mr. Speaker, this is not the way to go.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this budget that we had was a great budget. It was a strong budget. It was a steady budget. Best in Canada. Probably, probably, Mr. Speaker, the best in North America. And there is that strong possibility, Mr. Speaker, it could be the best in the whole world.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a pleasure to speak to this budget. It's been a pleasure to work with the people on this side, to work with the Finance minister, our second Finance minister who has done an absolutely admiral job of running this province, putting money where the money should be, putting money into the hands of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I will not support the amendment and I definitely will be supporting the budget. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, we're certainly fortunate to live in a country like Canada and especially in the province of Saskatchewan, especially when you see some of the devastation that's going around in the world. Our hearts and our prayers go out to the people of Japan for the devastation they're facing, besides the unrest throughout the Middle East, the uprising in Yemen, the war in Afghanistan, and the war for freedom in Libya. So Saskatchewan's a pretty nice place to be in, and Canada in particular.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about good things, and that's really where the budget comes from, comes into, in Saskatchewan. It is a good budget — a budget for growth, a budget for the future, a budget for the people. We're talking about a Saskatchewan Party government, and I'd like to congratulate the Minister of Finance for presenting that last week and all the staff and the hours that go into that.

And my friend from, my colleague from Thunder Creek went over some of the quotations, the endorsements from the budget presentation. I'd like to go through . . . I've picked out three that I thought were very, very good. Close to my heart is the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. And Steve McLellan from the Saskatchewan said:

I like the fact that they have reduced some of the education property tax. I like the fact that small-business tax is going down. I like the fact that they have reduced the provincial debt somewhat and making sure that tuition isn't going up much higher. I think those are all good news stories for Saskatchewan.

There's one from Marilyn Braun-Pollon of the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business]:

Small-business owners like this budget on a number of fronts. One, that it's balanced. The fact that we're paying down debt and their cutting tax priorities is beginning to be addressed with the reduction of the small-business tax rates from 4.5 per cent to 2 per cent.

And one that really sums it up just in a single sentence from Brett Fairbairn at the University of Saskatchewan says, "It's a reminder how lucky we are to live in Saskatchewan."

This budget is really the best, no doubt about it, and the best in the last few decades. It's a budget for the people to keep the progress of the province moving forward and growing.

The budget is about being balanced. It's tax cuts. It's improving services, continuing to build on the brighter future of this province and for the people of this province. It's about families. It's about small business, health care, education, housing, child care, and agriculture. This is about growing the province, respecting the people, and, Mr. Speaker, doing what is right. It is the Saskatchewan advantage.

This budget builds on the strength of Saskatchewan resources to the benefit of all the people — better quality of life, lower taxes, reduced debt, and a balanced budget. It is a Saskatchewan advantage. This is a very popular, a very positive budget and demonstrates how well Saskatchewan is doing compared with other provinces and other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that I wanted to get into politics and be part of the government was on the belief that Saskatchewan could perform much better than it had been in past years. The oil, the gas, the potash — these resources have been Saskatchewan assets even before Saskatchewan was a province. And these last few decades while Alberta thrived on their resource development, Saskatchewan sat stagnated, sending a lot of our young people out of the province. But, Mr. Speaker, now is our time. Now is Saskatchewan time and this budget reflects it.

Now, Saskatchewan encourages investment. We welcome people back. We welcome immigrants from all other parts of Canada and from corners of the world. Come and invest in Saskatchewan. There's a proper return for residents with all these investments, and we want to make sure that those people that take the risk to invest are looked after as well. But we are

building a province, creating more opportunities and less regulated restrictions.

This budget takes us one more step to being a competitive advantage to live, to work, and to create wealth, to raise a family right here in the province. It's a good, balanced budget, the fourth balanced budget of this Saskatchewan Party government.

There's even a surplus forecast, and by our own legislation half of that surplus goes to paying down debt. And paying down debt is good. When we took over government, the opposition claimed that there were \$2 billion in the treasury. One has to ask, why didn't they use it? What did they do with it? The infrastructure was run down. There was a huge provincial debt. There was no plan to improve, but they did nothing. They had no plan. They had no understanding of managing success. There was a huge debt in Saskatchewan — a financial debt, a human resources debt, and an infrastructure debt.

Mr. Speaker, we increased, in fact we substantially increased funding to CBOs. We doubled the seniors supplement. We invested in highways and schools, health care facilities and personnel, with hiring 800 nurses to address the huge nursing shortage. And we paid down debt. This budget calls for a further \$325 million to pay down debt. That's almost 40 per cent, or over 40 per cent, in just four years. And of course by reducing debt you save on interest and those interest savings can be turned back into social programs and economic programs — a real Saskatchewan advantage. Less debt is a Saskatchewan advantage.

With that, we also help cities and rural municipalities with substantial increases in their revenue sharing. During the first three years of the Saskatchewan Party government, there's been more money provided to cities and rural municipalities. And in this budget this will increase to one full percentage point of the PST, an increase of \$49.5 million from last year. That represents a 70 per cent increase over total revenue sharings from '07 and '08. And it's important to realize the significance of the revenue sharing, that Saskatchewan residents understand that this major increase has helped every municipality in the province.

In Moose Jaw we've seen a small mill rate increase this year. However that increase would have been in multiples if the revenue sharing had not been increased by our government. The mayor said Wednesday's budget announcement brought with it much anticipated and appreciated increases — a total of \$6 million, Moose Jaw's share of the provincial revenue sharing for the '11-12 budget, which is a 29.5 per cent increase from last year. Revenue sharing to the city of Moose Jaw has more than doubled under our government.

Mr. Speaker, another significant tax reduction is the education property reduction that was started early in our government's mandate. This *Saskatchewan Advantage* budget will further reduce property taxes, completing this government's commitment to education property tax reform. Education is important and, without decreasing funding to education, we lifted the burden off property owners. Saskatchewan residents who own property, whether it's a home in town, a farm, a ranch, a business, the education portion has been greatly

reduced, putting more money back in the pocket of property owners. That's the Saskatchewan advantage.

Reducing the education property tax means that from 2008, residents in Moose Jaw, for example, saw average tax reductions before reassessment calculations of approximately \$1,900 on a home assessed at \$200,000 or \$2,800 on a home assessed at \$300,000. Lower taxes is another reason for people to consider making Saskatchewan their home. It's another Saskatchewan advantage.

And while changing the education property tax, education funding has still seen increases with our government. And this year an increase of 2.3 per cent will be designated to education. This budget also includes almost \$20 million for capital projects including school capital, school-based child care, and pre-kindergarten capital funding. There is also, will also be an increase of 500 additional child care spaces.

Saskatchewan people put in great effort to work to build their future and look after their families. This year the budget will increase the personal exemption level so they can keep more of that money themselves. Most Saskatchewan families with dependent children will earn more tax-free income here than if they lived anywhere else in Canada. And over 110,000 residents will pay no provincial income tax at all, another Saskatchewan advantage.

This budget continues to focusing on housing. The government will continue to support Saskatchewan people in need with significant investments in affordable housing. And this was announced earlier by the Social Services minister — a five-point action plan to add at least 4,600 new housing units over the next five years, Mr. Speaker.

The Headstart on a Home, designed to stimulate construction of new, affordable homes. The affordable home ownership program, affordable home ownership program will see the provincial government match municipal tax incentives. The rent construction incentive, government will partner with municipalities to increase the supply of new rental housing construction. And 34 million investment in rental housing to develop more affordable rental housing and to rejuvenate government-funded housing across Saskatchewan, as well as partnership with the Habitat for Humanity partnerships throughout this province.

[21:30]

Mr. Speaker, housing is important, and we want to look after it. And the opposition is talking about rent controls, but what we don't need is rent controls. What we do need is more housing, and this government is looking after the housing needs. Rent controls will inhibit construction for housing and property, rental property. But they don't understand it. They don't get it. It takes away the incentive to invest in housing, in construction. What we need is more housing, and that's what this government is doing.

And while we're talking about policies that are coming from the opposite side, the review of royalties . . . And I want to quote. I want to quote a quote from a premier, a former premier of BC, Premier Bennett. It said, be careful what you say

because the world is listening. He was talking to some union negotiations at the time and he said, be careful what you say because the world is listening. And this is so true in Saskatchewan here where millions of dollars are being invested in plans for Saskatchewan potash to expand mines, for new mines, hundreds of jobs to carry us long into the future with economic prosperity.

With the rhetoric from the opposite side that says they want to review the royalties, this sets for an uneasiness with investors. Industry likes stability. They like to know the rules aren't going to change halfway through the game. And Alberta found this out with their royalty reviews, where investment picked up and left, whereas we welcomed that. It wasn't good for their economy, and we don't want to get caught in that trap. Britain changed their royalties last week and already petroleum companies are planning significant investment changes.

When we talk about royalties, Saskatchewan potash has the highest royalty rates in the world at 22 per cent. The rhetoric we get from the other side says 5 per cent on a dollar. That's not true, Mr. Speaker. Our royalties for Saskatchewan potash are 22 per cent. The next closest is Jordan at 11 per cent and New Brunswick is six and a half per cent. So you see, Mr. Speaker, we are more than competitive in this province, and we're a stable market for investors in potash. Be careful what you say because the world is listening.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Ethiopia a little bit. Ethiopia is a small country, and it has significant amount of potash. In fact from the *Ethiopian Review* there's a quote that says, "China's \$300 billion sovereign wealth fund may finance China Mining United Fund's plan to develop a potash project in Ethiopia . . ." The thing about Ethiopia potash, that it is close to the surface. It's almost to a point that it could be strip-mined rather than solution-mined. It would be much less cost to produce it. And if you look at a map and find out where Ethiopia is, it's a lot closer to China and to India, which is some of the major buyers of potash. Should we fool around with the royalties here, the investment could go to places like Ethiopia, and that would be devastating.

This is serious stuff. Any change to royalties at this time would only lead to economic disaster. It would result in less revenue to drive our economy and to drive our programs, to increase our investment in infrastructure, to assist social programs, and it would lead this province back into a have-not status.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is expected to lead the country in economic growth. Our population continues to grow and our employment picture is very bright. Both the national economy and the global markets of our commodities are creating greater prosperity for all of our citizens. It means more money available to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people — building hospitals and building schools and highways and other infrastructure.

Saskatchewan is blessed with so many advantages: our abundant natural resources, our pristine environment, our sense of community, and our quality of life. And our greatest advantage is of course our people. All of these are part of our great Saskatchewan advantage.

This budget is built on that advantage to create a better quality of life and more opportunities for all our citizens, improving public service for the people of Saskatchewan. It cuts taxes, both personal income tax and small business tax, as well as property tax. It pays down debt — \$325 million for a \$3 billion paydown in our debt since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, health continues to be a priority of this government. The regional health authorities have an increase of 9.7 per cent in funding this year. We continue to work on wait lists.

And I want to tell you about a constituent of mine that stopped me just last week. And he said, I want to tell you a story about a heart valve that he had to have replaced. And his doctor says, it's not urgent, but we should have it looked at. He sent him to the specialist. The specialist said, yes it's not urgent, but we should do it probably sooner rather than later. When are you available? And Mike Barton was the constituent's name, and he says, well I'm available any time. He says, well can you be here tomorrow morning? And he says, well no, I can't be here that quick. Can we do it next week? But it just goes to show you the work on the waiting lists and especially in the cardiac area.

The STARS program, the helicopter air ambulance is another health advancement that we've made in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I should while I'm on my feet, I want to talk a little bit about the biggest project in Moose Jaw, the Moose Jaw Hospital. The 80/20 ratio of funding change was a significant benefit for Moose Jaw residents. We only have to come up with 20 per cent of the local money. The \$450 capital planning from last year's budget has been put well to use by the Five Hills Health Region. They've done their due diligence and have done a series of studies and have compiled a report on what the capital planning should be. That report is in its finishing stages and will be advanced to the ministry in the next short while. At that point, the ministry can and will make a decision on what the best plan for the Moose Jaw Union Hospital would be.

Already this government has put \$5 million toward the next plan, the design of what that addition will be to the Moose Jaw Hospital. So I appreciate the work that is being done by the Five Hills Health Region in moving this forward. The last major renovation to the Moose Jaw Hospital was in the '70s, so that's almost 50 years ago. And we want to take our time. We want to do it right because we only do this once. And I appreciate the efforts that are going to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the province is strong. Saskatchewan continues to grow and our time has come. The budget day was a great day in Saskatchewan, yet it was quite noticeable that the members opposite sat with their heads down. And according to one of my guests that sat up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, he noticed the Leader of the Opposition sitting there with his head down. In fact his quote was, "Ninety per cent of the time he was playing on his BlackBerry." They weren't really interested in the doings of the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great budget. It's for all of Saskatchewan citizens. It will keep Saskatchewan moving forward. It is our time. It's a Saskatchewan advantage. Mr. Speaker, I support

this budget fully, and I will not support the amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again it is truly a pleasure and an honour for me to have the privilege of entering into this particular debate, the debate on the budget speech on behalf of the fine folks of Regina Northeast who, Mr. Speaker, it has been my honour to represent them for a while here now in the legislature and going on nearly a dozen years.

And, Mr. Speaker, as you are aware and I think perhaps all my colleagues and everyone in the constituency certainly are aware that I have indicated that I would not be standing for re-election in the upcoming election. And that, Mr. Speaker, you know, carries its own circumstances with it. And I'll certainly deal with that to a much greater length and in much greater detail at some point in time in the future before we leave this great Assembly at the end of this session.

Mr. Speaker, I do though want to just briefly say thank you to my constituents who are honouring me the privilege of having the ability to represent them in this great Assembly on an ongoing basis. We all pay a certain price I suppose to get here, in one way or the other, and certainly nobody's paid a bigger price in my involvement in politics and my time spent in this Assembly then has my family. So I want to say a very special thank you to my wife Carol and our daughters and our son-in-law for their support and their ongoing encouragement through the years and through the help that they gave me through the, you know, the low times as well as the high times.

I also want to say a special thank you to my granddaughter Emma who has . . . I've had the privilege of introducing her in this Assembly, and I hope to once again before I'm no longer officially an MLA here. It's something about becoming a grandparent and having grandchildren that sort of completes the cycle or the circle of life, and that's certainly, Emma has done that for us in our family.

I also want to say a special thank you to my constituency assistant Sylvia who has been with me virtually all of the time that I've been a member in this Assembly representing Regina Northeast. And for those who have had the stamina to stay with me that long, it takes a special kind of person to put up with me that long. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, it's not easy.

But, Mr. Speaker, it truly is a pleasure and an honour and a privilege to be able to enter into this debate, the debate on the budget speech and to do so, like I said, on behalf of the good folks of Regina Northeast.

And after the budget came down last Wednesday, I decided that what I'd like to do is to talk to some people in my constituency as well as to some people across this province as to the budget and as to how this budget may have impacted upon them. So as I was actually driving home on Thursday, I thought of a lady who has always been very, very open and very honest with me and a very fine person.

So I was not too far from where she lives, so I swung in to that particular neighbourhood and went up and knocked on the door, only to my surprise to find out that she no longer lived there and that she had moved nearly seven or eight months ago. And so I had her phone number so I gave her call in that evening, and I had a discussion with her as to why she decided to leave that nice little house that she was in.

It was an older house, Mr. Speaker, but it was well maintained. It was a nice little house and certainly suited her needs as a single mother with two children. I thought it was a good fit, and so did she. Mr. Speaker, she thought it was a nice house too. She'd been in there for a few years. She really liked the house. She was renting that house. But unfortunately the rent costs, the utility cost, the increase in utility cost put her into a bind where she had to make a decision, Mr. Speaker. She said it came down to making a decision between paying the rent or buying food for her children. So of course, Mr. Speaker, she made the decision to look for other accommodations — not as suitable perhaps, Mr. Speaker, but more affordable. And that was what drove her decision to move, was simply because her money was no longer stretching to be able to make all the bills, to pay the rent, and to be able to buy food for her children. So she made that decision, Mr. Speaker, that she was going to leave the nice little house that she'd been in for several years and move into a less desirable location, but one that she could certainly afford.

That, Mr. Speaker, then caused me to think of a couple who also live just outside of my riding, but a couple I've known for a number of years. I believe that they would probably be in their early 70s today. And I gave them a call because I know that they're, you know, people who stay certainly up to date on the news and follow the goings-on in this province. And I would think that they would have a good idea of what was contained in the budget, particularly as it might apply to seniors.

[21:45]

So I was able to talk to them and to find out what was new in their life and how this budget may have impacted upon them. And it was an interesting conversation, Mr. Speaker, much, much longer conversation than I had thought it would be initially. It was a conversation because, longer because he was telling me that that was a house that they had lived in virtually all of their married life. They'd raised their family there. It was their home. They had looked after it. It was in good shape — been looked after, Mr. Speaker. They were proud of it. But they were experiencing difficulty being able to continue to pay the bills because they were on a fixed income. And what they were experiencing in the last few years was steadily increasing utility rates, increasing cost of living, increasing food prices, and finding themselves in the circumstances where they may have to move out of that house because they can no longer afford the cost of living in that home — in their home, Mr. Speaker, a home that's been theirs for virtually all of their married life.

That then, Mr. Speaker, made me think of another lady I knew who lived in an apartment building that used to be in my constituency. It's just outside of, but I've known this lady and her late husband ever since I was, well a very young fellow. And so I gave her a call as to how she was doing. And that was another conversation, Mr. Speaker, that certainly surprised me

because I had thought that she was doing fairly well, but only to find out that she was contemplating looking at other places to live because her rent had gone up so dramatically over the last four or five years. Add to that the increased cost of living over the last four or five years, and she was finding it difficult, Mr. Speaker, very difficult to make ends meet.

The sadness here, Mr. Speaker, is she doesn't have any immediate family in Regina. She doesn't have any immediate family in the province. And she was wondering basically where she would be able to go to a location that she'd be able to afford and be able to yet continue to live in a level of dignity that I think she deserves after being a senior citizen who has worked their entire life, lived her entire life in this province, worked her entire life in this province, sacrificed to build Saskatchewan to what we have today, and now have to be worried about where she's going to live in her golden years. Mr. Speaker, that is what has been some of the effects of this budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, when talking to these folks, it's easy to see that this budget simply failed many of the people in this great province of ours. This budget has certainly failed to address affordable housing. This budget has failed to address the ability for seniors, those people who have, particularly for seniors — those people who have worked in this province, lived in this province, dedicated themselves to this province, and in many cases when called upon, sacrificed for this province. It's failed to be able to provide them an adequate support levels for their golden years, for the times that they should be able to retire and retire in dignity.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of aspects in this budget that one could go into, and I'm certainly not going to go into them all tonight, but I do want to touch on a few topics.

Another topic that has been brought to my attention has been certainly the topic of highways, highways particularly in the southern part of the province here as it pertains to our resort areas, lakes, and resort cottages. Those, Mr. Speaker, certainly those roads are in sad state of repair. In fact there was a poll, an unofficial poll on a website. I think it was mysask.com here most recently that indicated that 72 per cent of those who responded to that poll indicated that the highways to our lakes and to our resort areas were certainly in bad state of repairs. And they were urging the government to pay some attention to those roads because those are the roads are the arteries to much of our tourism — tourism from within this province and tourism from outside of the province — and yet, Mr. Speaker, they are not being looked after by this government and certainly are in a sad state of repairs.

But when you talk about highways that are not being looked after, Mr. Speaker, you can't help but think of northern Saskatchewan. Communities in northern Saskatchewan don't have the luxury that many of the communities in southern Saskatchewan do, and that is having an all-weather road in all four directions from the community. In northern Saskatchewan, there's one road — one road in and the same road out, Mr. Speaker. And yet this government has failed to address the issues of maintaining those roads in proper all-weather conditions, in proper safety conditions.

And, Mr. Speaker, those people in northern Saskatchewan are

the people who are the custodians of much of the resources that we enjoy in this great province and we extract from northern Saskatchewan without returning any of that revenue in a meaningful way to maintain the highways in northern Saskatchewan. The resources we extract from northern Saskatchewan such as uranium, such as gold, more recently diamonds and some of the richest diamond . . . I believe and I've been led to believe that some of the richest diamond fields are located in northern Saskatchewan, and they will yet be developed as time goes on. Rare earth minerals — another very rare mineral that has been certainly discovered in northern Saskatchewan will be developed there.

Northern Saskatchewan offers a great deal of tourism and the opportunity for tourism, an opportunity to expand the tourism, particularly with sports fishing in the summer and hunting in the winter months and so on, Mr. Speaker. There's a real wealth in northern Saskatchewan that is not being shared with the people in northern Saskatchewan through at least maintaining their road structure, their highway structure so that they would have decent and safe roads to travel on. After all, as I said, they only have that one road — one road in and one road out. They certainly are entitled to a decent all-weather road, one that they can rely on regardless of whether it's wintertime or summertime, that they can drive on that road and that highway without fear, in safe and reasonable conditions and safe environment.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, this budget has failed to provide the people of Saskatchewan the needed roads and highways that we need in a meaningful way. I know this government likes to brag about the amount of money that they have in the highways budget but, Mr. Speaker, they're not spending it in a meaningful way that's supporting the people who really, really need that, particularly in northern Saskatchewan where those roads, Mr. Speaker . . . And I've drove on them. And I would encourage all the members over there to drive on them if they think that it's wonderful, to drive to Pelican Narrows, drive to Sandy Bay and see what that road is like. And I would advise you not to do it around 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock in the afternoon when the sun is going down because you simply are going to run off the road because it's a very dangerous stretch of road, Mr. Speaker. And I drove on that road more than once, and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, it is a dangerous stretch of road. And I believe that the stats of accidents, stats that you can get from SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] will back that up, Mr. Speaker.

Health care, health care is another issue, Mr. Speaker, that this government has certainly not been able to keep up its election commitments on. And these are various . . . Health care is a very broad and large field, Mr. Speaker, so I'm not going to go into them all. But there are some things that I think that we need to do as a province here and that this government's certainly failed, and that is being able to provide for our seniors of this great province — the people, in many cases, who have lived here all their life, have worked here all their life, dedicated themselves to Saskatchewan, committed themselves to this great province, sacrificed for this province when they were asked to — and now they find themselves, Mr. Speaker, being let down by this province.

And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because we see that the funding for

long-term care has certainly shrank in this province, most notably in certainly the Canora, Kamsack area there where most recently they announced the closure of 18 long-term care beds — 18 long-term care beds in Canora; I believe another five in Kamsack, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I find this really, really strange because in that part of the province we have twice the provincial average of senior citizen population. As I understand it, the senior citizen population of Saskatchewan is approximately 13 per cent, but in the Canora, Kamsack, Yorkton area it's 26 per cent. Instead of opening up long-term care beds for the senior population in an area of the province that has twice the provincial average of seniors, what do we see happening? We see long-term care beds being closed by this government.

Mr. Speaker, doing that during a time that they have big money for the CEOs, chief executive officers . . . In fact they give their chief executive officers raises that are larger than some families live on for an entire year in this province. They do that, Mr. Speaker, but yet they have no money for health care workers, for the people who provide the health, the care, the services on a day-by-day basis, the front-line troops, the front-line workers. They have no money for them, but they have money for chief executive officers at a rate that is greater than some total family incomes in this province, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this budget has certainly failed to provide the people of Saskatchewan much needed health care in their times of need.

Mr. Speaker, I will just briefly touch on another subject that I think needs to be touched on, and that is certainly the subject of agriculture. Last fall, Mr. Speaker, we had a producer group down here that represented livestock producers. They were here to lobby the government and the minister for some meaningful help because as we all know, that last year was a very wet year and that there was . . . Certainly the grain producers had a very difficult time in getting their crop in, and in most cases with a little luck in October they were able to get most of it off.

But livestock producers had found themselves in a real problem because they hadn't been able to put up an adequate amount of feed to be able to meet their needs going into the winter months. Normally many of them would have kept their calves through, whether they be short keeps or kept them until they were finished. But, Mr. Speaker, they had to make a decision last fall because they didn't have enough feed to feed their calves and their cows. They needed to buy more feed. They didn't have the money of course to do it, so they sold their calves early, used that money to buy the feed.

So after lobbying the government here to finally come up with some money in that direction, there were was an announcement made toward springtime by the provincial government to provide funds for a livestock feed program. But, Mr. Speaker, it was after the calves were sold. It was after the calves were sold in order to generate money to buy feed to maintain the main herd. So, Mr. Speaker, once again this government came up with a little bit too little and a lot too late.

Mr. Speaker, we see the same thing in crop insurance. We see crop insurance, recently announced by the minister, that there would be an increase in the crop insurance premium of 21 per cent. Yet I've had producers show me their recent crop insurance statement that indicates in their particular situation

their bill has increased by nearly 100 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again this budget has failed the producers of Saskatchewan, the livestock producers of this province. It has failed the grain producers of this province. Mr. Speaker, it is truly . . . When you look around the various aspects of the provincial economy, and it is not hard to see that this budget has had a negative impact on much of the economy and much of the province. So with that, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to tell, I'm sure, that I will not be voting for the budget. I will be though voting for the amendment.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Thank you.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:00.]

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