



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

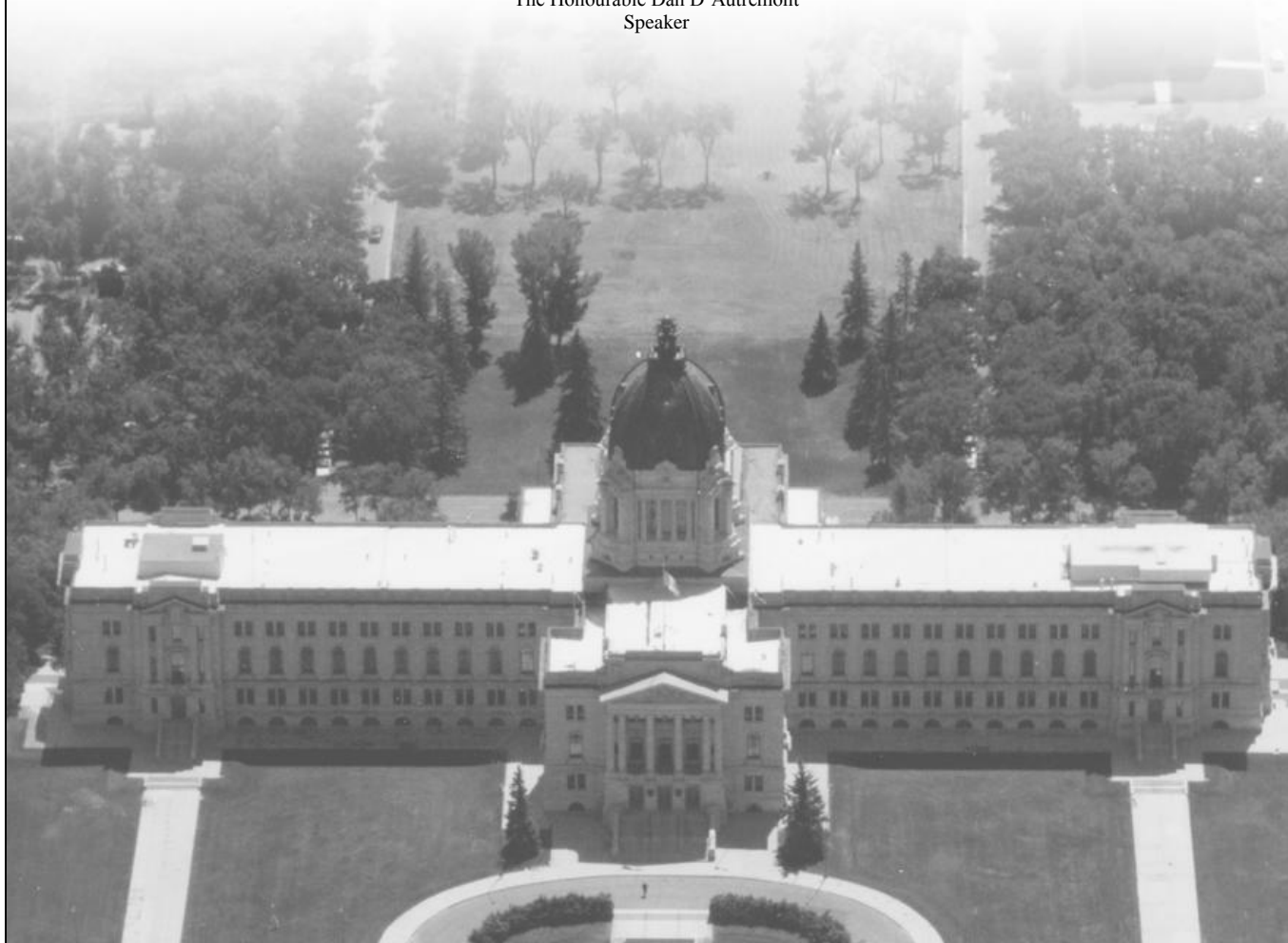
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — John Nilson

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Cox, Herb	SP	The Battlefords
D’Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Jurgens, Victoria	SP	Prince Albert Northcote
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lawrence, Greg	SP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Hon. Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock, the day's session will continue. I recognize the Minister for Crown Investments Corporation.

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.]

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the support of the colleagues on this side now. Just before we adjourned for the supper hour, I had about 10 seconds on my feet, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues said that was the best speech I've ever given in the House. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to add a few more remarks to the comments I was able to make then.

The first, Mr. Speaker, is this is a terrific balanced budget. It's the fourth, the fifth, Mr. Speaker, put forward by the Saskatchewan Party since 2007. But before I get into these comments, I would just like to mention the three ladies that work in the Lloydminster constituency office, Mr. Speaker: Caren, Marilyn and Rachelle. They do a terrific job. We provide the government's face in Lloydminster and the Lloydminster riding, and we deal with a lot of very serious issues, and I have nothing but confidence and faith that these ladies represent our government and represent it well.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has been profiled as austerity and prosperity. The members on the opposite side of the floor, Mr. Speaker, have struggled a great deal with how you can have both, and, Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine why that is difficult. If you look at a business, Mr. Speaker — I came from a small business before I got elected — small businesses have times of prosperity. They have times where they have to watch their costs very closely. And the best small businesses, Mr. Speaker, watch their costs very closely even in times of prosperity. And you'll see very often that you'll have businesses that overreach, overspend, buy infrastructure or products they don't necessarily need when times are good. And when there's a downturn in the economy, Mr. Speaker, they are overleveraged, and often the businesses end with a really good auction sale.

I know looking around our community in Lloydminster, there's some terrific business people that have been there a long time. The oil industry is certainly one that sees many cycles. And the business people that have been successful, are those that have been very prudent with their funds through good and bad times, Mr. Speaker.

But if I had to boil it down to one word, if austerity and prosperity, Mr. Speaker, are too much to handle, it would be responsible. This is a responsible, balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, and not just responsible to those that are paying tax, paying PST [provincial sales tax] because that's almost everyone in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and it is very responsible to those people. But it's also very responsible to those that have a need for the services provided by government, Mr. Speaker. And again that is almost everyone in Saskatchewan. I would say that is everyone in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The government has made decisions to ensure that programs are sustainable, that the drug plan, Mr. Speaker, the seniors' drug plan have increased by \$5 a prescription in this budget, and that ensures that this drug plan is on a solid financial footing and going forward it can maintain its record of ensuring that appropriate drugs are in the formulary and serve the people appropriately. And I just had a town hall meeting in northern Saskatchewan in Pierceland on Friday, and that was brought to my attention, Mr. Speaker. The strength of the drug plan is something that was very important to the people there.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca made a comment when he was giving his speech about a week ago about and trying to take some credit for the in-migration into Saskatchewan. And he was trying to make the point, and I would argue how successfully, that their government should get some of the credit. And I think that politicians don't do themselves a service when they start taking credit for things, Mr. Speaker. I think that the people of Saskatchewan deserve the credit for the success we see today.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from the member from Athabasca's speech on the 5th of March. It's page 295 of *Hansard*. And in this portion of his speech he's trying to profile what happened after the election, and he's trying to say it isn't true. But this is how he profiles it, the member from Athabasca says:

... November 7th, 2007, there was 60,000 people waiting along the Lloydminster border and on the Manitoba border, and as soon as they declared the Saskatchewan Party victorious in their election bid, they all moved in. They all moved in. Now we got more people thanks to these guys, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member was being sarcastic and saying that that wasn't true. And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't a lineup of cars at Lloydminster — I was in Lloydminster that night — but there was a terrific feeling of optimism, Mr. Speaker, absolutely was.

And people in Saskatchewan, people in Canada, Mr. Speaker, they make decisions based on the environment that they have in front of them. And Lloydminster is the perfect example. It's a city right on the border of Alberta and Saskatchewan. When the city was formed or the two towns, one on each side, formed together, Saskatchewan was by far the biggest. Through the years, through many years of NDP [New Democratic Party], Mr. Speaker, governments, we saw that the Alberta side grew very quickly. Lloydminster had one of the fastest growing

communities in the country. And through the '90s, through the early 2000s, we saw anemic growth on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster. And the Alberta side was one of the fastest growing communities in the country.

I don't know if they have a good explanation as to why that might have been, but I do have a couple of thoughts, Mr. Speaker, because following 2007, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a reversal. We've seen that income taxes were reduced and reduced dramatically, Mr. Speaker. Where before 2007, families would choose to live on the Alberta side. They work in Lloydminster or around Lloydminster, and they had to buy or build a house. It made sense to build it on the Alberta side because the tax rates were lower. If you wanted to build outside of Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, property taxes, Mr. Speaker, would say it makes more sense to build on the Alberta side than Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, fortunately in some earlier budgets, those tax rates were lowered, and now, Mr. Speaker, in Lloydminster it is, for a family of four it's beneficial to live on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster. And the result in this past year, Mr. Speaker, more housing units were built on the Saskatchewan side than on the Alberta side, and I think that that is something that I think that our government has been very proud of, the increase in population. But in Lloydminster where you're comparing two jurisdictions side by side, we have a great partner in Alberta. They have one of the strongest economies in the country as well. And for the two provinces to be side by side, both providing great opportunity for newcomers, for existing residents, it serves us both very well.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of the new Saskatchewan, I have had a couple of incidents in the last couple months that have really stood out for me, and I would like to share them now because I think that this budget is really the budget for the new Saskatchewan. It's building upon the previous budgets. And the first one, Mr. Speaker, is kind of two different paradigms and one that I think is shared by the members opposite. And I was the other party in this conversation, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that this represents the new Saskatchewan. But it was a social evening, and many people were sitting around talking, and it was getting later on in the evening, and people were speaking very frankly. And one of the people at the table said, you know what I hate? I hate those big trucks that are all around. And, Mr. Speaker, I was, you know, I drive a truck myself, and I blurted out, what are you talking about? I love those big trucks. And I articulated to him that I think that these trucks represent, you know, prosperity. A lot of them are maybe jacked up and have bulging tires and probably make a little more noise than they reasonably need to, but it's a sign that there's opportunity in Saskatchewan, that people are working hard and are being prosperous. And, Mr. Speaker, a lot of them have welders plunked in the back. And it's an exciting time in Saskatchewan.

The person that had made the comment about big trucks, Mr. Speaker, defended his position. To him, it represented all the negative. He liked the old Saskatchewan. He made the comment, Mr. Speaker, that these people that have now . . . driving these trucks, they left Saskatchewan. When the NDP were in government, these people left. And now they come back, and they've got all this money, and they're driving these big trucks.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't see eye to eye that night. But I know many of my friends and many people from around home that had to leave Saskatchewan to find careers and opportunities to earn a living and raise their family in a manner that they thought was acceptable, and now they are so grateful that Saskatchewan is leading the country. They're proud of their province, and they want to come home and be close to family and friends and be a part of the prosperity. They feel invested here, and they want to work hard, to work together to make this province great. And I'm very proud that this budget enables people to do that, Mr. Speaker, and will continue to do so.

The other experience I had, Mr. Speaker, is we took our family skiing to North Battleford. They have a great . . . Table Mountain. I think that calling it a mountain might be a slight overstatement, but it is a terrific ski hill, and we were skiing there all day. And the phenomenal thing is, Mr. Speaker, it felt almost like I was in Whistler; there were so many foreign languages being spoken all around us. There was Spanish. There was Russian, Ukrainian. There was a family there in full Middle Eastern garb, Mr. Speaker. And everybody was there skiing and having fun, everybody was . . . a lot of newcomers who were proud to be in Saskatchewan, who recognized the opportunity and were there to ski and have fun.

And it was something that when I grew up, we went to Table Mountain fairly regularly. And there was a lot of people, myself included, skiing in blue jeans or coveralls and Carhartts, instead of Sunice, was always a tradition in our family. And now we go there, and it's a multicultural ski resort. And it's pretty cool that that's, not in my riding, but very close to my riding, Mr. Speaker.

A couple other things I'd like to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is priorities. And the member for Rosemont, today in question period, Mr. Speaker, in his last question asked about priorities and said that the priorities of this government are all screwed up. And I was taken aback by that, Mr. Speaker, because I feel that our priorities are fairly well defined. We've come through an election where we've talked about priorities very clearly. I later found out that the member for Massey Place, last week in his speech, talked about misplaced priorities of this government. And I had to give that a little thought, Mr. Speaker, because I would ask them, what are their priorities?

This budget clearly lays out the priorities of this government: shortening wait times, a balanced budget. What are their priorities, Mr. Speaker? Our priorities are a rural locum pool to ensure there's appropriate health care in communities; continuing the highway work, Mr. Speaker, at the same level we have for the past four years; municipal revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. That is the priorities on this side of the House.

Building more schools to enable the continued recruitment, the young families that are moving here, Mr. Speaker — that's the future of the new Saskatchewan. What are their priorities, Mr. Speaker? Commitments to long-term care facilities and funding in this budget to build them, Mr. Speaker. That's the priorities on this side of the House. I ask those members, what are their priorities? And I think they have articulated their priorities fairly clearly. Certainly the member from Riversdale in the last week, Mr. Speaker, has articulated her priorities. And I don't know if that squares with the people of Saskatchewan, Mr.

Speaker.

I would like those members to think about the citizens of Saskatchewan, the guys driving the big trucks, the families, Mr. Speaker, that have moved back to Saskatchewan to start a life, to continue on in the careers they are.

I know in my riding, Mr. Speaker, people work extremely hard. Farmers, ranchers, they've come through a lot of tough years in agriculture — the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), the drought, Mr. Speaker. In the oil field, young men, young women go to work, work 12-, 16-hour days. That's not uncommon. They'll work seven on, three off, seven on, three off, all year long, Mr. Speaker. They work very hard. They are proud of the work they do, and they are a part of the success here in Saskatchewan.

And it's incumbent on us as government, as Treasury Board, as Minister of Finance, when we are providing funding for services, for programs, it's not our money, Mr. Speaker. It's the individuals that are working hard, that are paying taxes. That is who we represent and who we provide services to and who we are accountable to, Mr. Speaker. And when the members opposite, and specifically the member from Riversdale, has pet projects or has priorities that don't square with the budget, maybe . . . And I think it's important to be clear that what they're putting forward, Mr. Speaker, are a good industry, people that work very hard as well. But I want that member to know that when we crafted a budget, we had to ensure that programs were sustainable and that we were responsible for the people paying taxes.

And, Mr. Speaker, when asked about their priorities, the leader of their party said that they would find funding. They would find funding, Mr. Speaker. They thought that the agricultural programs were too rich and that they could go in — the same government, Mr. Speaker, that ripped up GRIP [gross revenue insurance program], that ripped up GRIP, Mr. Speaker — they also, Mr. Speaker, thought that revenue sharing to the municipalities was too rich, that if we just, if we just siphoned a little money out of the municipalities, no one would notice. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the record of their government. For too long, their government was in charge. We came in in '07 to find that municipalities had been underfunded for decades. And, Mr. Speaker, I want them to think about their priorities, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to end my comments here, but I look forward to hearing from the member from Riversdale as to what her priorities are and where she thinks we should be funding this. Should we be taking it out of agriculture? Should we be taking it out of the municipalities? Should we, Mr. Speaker, should we be doing a royalty review? Should we be doing a royalty review, Mr. Speaker? Those are questions I'd like to hear her ask.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity and I look forward to the debate. I will be supporting the budget and I will not be supporting the amendment.

[19:15]

The Speaker: — Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased . . . I guess this is my third opportunity to wade into budget speech debate, and it's always an opportunity too to say thank you to some very important people in our lives.

I know that the reason I'm here, Mr. Speaker, or the reason I chose to put my name forward to run is because I have two daughters, and my hope and my goal is to make sure that I leave this world a better place for them and for their cohort and future generations, Mr. Speaker. So I do this for my daughters, but my family has also had to make some huge sacrifices, as all our families do. So I would be remiss if I didn't thank my husband, Blair, who makes sure that things are running smoothly for us at home and that Hennessey and Ophelia are well cared for while I'm here in Regina, Mr. Speaker.

I also actually would like to thank my parents, who for me, particularly as a mother of young children in this legislature, my life is very dependent on my support system, which again is my husband. It's my mom and dad. It's one of my sisters and the many friends who, when I get home on Thursday night from a week here in the legislature, I have friends who will make sure that our family's got a good meal cooked. And I've got wonderful people in my life to make sure that I am able to do my very best representing the people of Saskatoon Riversdale.

I want to thank my staff, Vanessa, who's my main constituency assistant, who's fabulous. She's empathetic. She's hard-working. She's thoughtful. She's brilliant and incredibly tenacious and makes sure that the people of Saskatoon Riversdale get what they need in terms of services from our constituency office when I'm not able to be there. So a big thanks to Vanessa, and I really, really, very much appreciate all she does for our community. And last but not least, the people of Saskatoon Riversdale, who've placed a great deal of trust in me, Mr. Speaker, to be their voice here in this legislature, and I am honoured and privileged to be able to be here and speak and represent them, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things the Minister of Health said last night from his seat . . . It's been interesting listening to some of the debates here, Mr. Speaker, because I think the members opposite have some new talking points. The Minister of Health last night asked, well why can't you say something positive? Why is the opposition so negative? Why are they so pessimistic? And we've heard that in several speeches today, Mr. Speaker. So clearly their communications folks have tried to come up with some new talking points.

But unfortunately for the minister who had those comments last night, and everybody else, the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that our job is not to be the cheerleader for government. That is the cold, hard reality of opposition, Mr. Speaker. There are clearly enough pompom wavers on that side of the House. I don't think that they need any more.

Our job, Mr. Speaker, our job, Mr. Speaker, is to stand up for the people of Saskatchewan who feel like, on an \$11 billion budget and a booming economy thanks to our natural resources, life should be just a little bit easier. But there are many, many people who wonder about an \$11 billion budget and can't quite figure out, can't quite figure out why they aren't feeling all the positiveness that the Sask Party government touts in all its

rhetoric and its communications. That message that that government delivers isn't hitting home for many, many people, Mr. Speaker.

Those people come into our constituency offices. They write us letters. They call us. We run into them at community events. There are many, many people who wonder about an \$11 billion budget and wonder why they are not feeling the love, Mr. Speaker, as it were.

So despite all that, I want to take a moment to give credit where credit is due. And the one thing I'd like to commend the government on is the child and youth agenda. I think it's . . . Having worked in government before and having worked in community organizations as well, I think one of the problems that happens is people do sometimes work in silos. And there's nothing good or nothing positive about organizations that each have an impact on an individual not doing their work together. It's important that government ministries are in fact working in concert with each other to try to make sure that people have the support and the resources to live the best possible lives. And the reality is we don't live in silos and government shouldn't work in silos. So I think I would commend the government. I don't think . . . I would commend the government last year for developing that strategy and continuing to support it. That'll provide for better outcomes for families which is investing in children and youth.

I'm not quite sure why the members opposite are quite so noisy here. They've been the ones calling for some positive talk here so perhaps they should sit back and listen for a moment, Mr. Speaker. I'm saying positive things and I'm the subject of many heckles here, Mr. Speaker. Anyway there's so much anger coming across tonight here, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what it is. I don't know what they had for supper over there, Mr. Speaker, but it clearly didn't sit very well with them. The bottom line, the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is not . . . When government is working together and investing in young people, the outcomes for all of us down the road will be much better.

I also have to commend the government on the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program. This is something that I've . . . I worked in the disability community many years ago, Mr. Speaker, and I know that this was something people were very optimistic about. And the government implemented and put about 3,000 people who are now on it a few, a couple of years ago, and they have the second intake happening right now. I know people in the community have been very eager and anxious to hear about it. I've heard for the last several months people want information, want to know how it's going to roll out, and they're happy to be getting that information now.

So the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program, what it is, it's for people who have profound and enduring disabilities. So I know many advocates in the community are very happy about it and there will be about 7,000 more people enrolled in this program in the next little while. One of the best things about the program, people mention that it's an opportunity to, it's a benefit program that has a little bit more dignity. And come July, new folks on it will have greater benefits, which is absolutely fabulous, Mr. Speaker.

I do have some reservations and some concerns though. I have been told there are about 12,000 people on social assistance who have a disability flag on their charts, which means that they have a disability, Mr. Speaker. So I understand that in this next intake there'll be about 7,000 people, which means there'll be about 5,000 people who will not be enrolled in this program yet. So what we'll have is we've got the SAID program and then we've got the traditional social assistance program. So we will be leaving people on traditional social assistance program living on the same rates as they were now. So you'll have one group who has an increased benefit compared to the other.

And I worry about those people on the edge, Mr. Speaker, and quite frankly even the people without disabilities who are on social assistance because social assistance is not . . . You're living in poverty, Mr. Speaker, when you live on social assistance. It's not a pleasant existence. It's not an existence that people aspire to. And I think that there are few people, Mr. Speaker, if any, who make a choice to live that kind of life.

Just for the record here, Mr. Speaker, a single individual, what you get to live on social assistance, your living allowance, is \$255 a month, Mr. Speaker, \$255 a month for food, clothing, travel, personal, and household items . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . which actually the member from Estevan, the member from Estevan is yelling from her seat that it's a lot more the NDP gave . . . My apologies. My apologies to the member from Estevan. My apologies to the member from Estevan. It was the Minister of Education.

Well in fact it was the NDP who increased that rate and it has not increased since that last . . . This government has not touched the living allowance despite the fact we've had increased cost of living here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. People, a single individual on social assistance has to live off \$255, Mr. Speaker, which is not enough, Mr. Speaker, which is not enough.

I'd like to say that the government — again, giving credit where credit is due — the government has increased the housing allowance, but this hasn't kept pace, this has not kept pace with the reality of the rental market, especially in places like Regina where there's such a tight vacancy rate. Such a tight vacancy rate, Mr. Speaker.

So even if you get the full rental supplement, the reality is even if you get the full rental supplement, there are not apartments available in the same, in the price range that you're allowed to rent for, Mr. Speaker. So what's happening is people are using their full shelter allowance and then tapping into their \$255 or plus living allowance, and living off of even less than that, Mr. Speaker. So again I would like to make sure that the members opposite know that we don't think that everything they do is bad. There are some good things. But you know what? Our job is to make sure that the government is aware of the shortfalls or the people who are being left out, Mr. Speaker.

So speaking of people who are living on fixed incomes, I'd like to talk a little bit about the children's and seniors' drug plan. This government, Mr. Speaker, is increasing prescription drug costs by \$5 a prescription. Well if you take a senior citizen who averages three to four prescriptions, it's \$240 a year, Mr. Speaker. And when you're on a fixed income, that makes a very

real difference. And yes, they have indexed the seniors' income plan, which I would have said is a very . . . increased, which this government has in this budget. I would have commended this government for a modest increase, for a modest increase. I would have commended this government for a modest increase in the seniors' income plan, but when you give with one hand and take away with another, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that something should be commended, Mr. Speaker.

My parents, Mr. Speaker, my own parents are both almost 80 years old. My mother will be 80 years old this summer, and my father just turned 79, Mr. Speaker. I know that they're very concerned about people they know who this will be a very real issue, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to read an email from a constituent, Mr. Speaker. I can get up here, Mr. Speaker, and say everything that I want, and what I need to do though is make sure that the voices of the people in Saskatoon Riversdale and elsewhere are heard by this government, Mr. Speaker. Because their voice, I think, carries far more weight than mine, Mr. Speaker. So this is from a constituent of Saskatoon Riversdale:

I think the Brad Wall government should be ashamed of itself. In a time of prosperity and growth, they are increasing the cost of living for our seniors, the people who built this province! On the cost of their medication yet! Not luxury items they can do without — but the very things they need to live. I don't suppose any of *their* parents are lower income, or they might see what a disgraceful thing they have done — literally taking food out of all the mouths of some. I feel any senior with an income under \$50,000 should not have to pay AT ALL for their prescription drugs. What is wrong with these people? Have they no shame [Mr. Speaker]?

This is a resident of Saskatoon Riversdale who started the message, Mr. Speaker, by saying, "I have nowhere else to go with this anger except to my representative in government — so that's you Danielle."

So this is a letter from someone I received today here in Saskatoon Riversdale, Mr. Speaker, some grave concerns about the increases to the seniors' drug plan.

I think another thing we need to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is another grab from seniors — \$240 a year, Mr. Speaker, for hygienic supplies for seniors in long-term care. So is this the best place to get more money, from the seniors who have worked so hard to build this province to where it is today?

I heard the member from Lloydminster saying, well where would they cut? What are their priorities? What are their priorities? Well you know what, Mr. Speaker? I would perhaps start with cutting in Executive Council, making sure that we have our priorities right. I would be cutting in Executive Council. I would not be adding three more politicians. The members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, would not be adding three more politicians at millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. So they were very curious about where we would cut, Mr. Speaker, and those are two places we could start: the folks in Executive Council and the three politicians that the Sask Party government is planning to add, Mr. Speaker.

[19:30]

Another thing in this budget that I have some grave concerns about, again representing Saskatoon Riversdale, much of the casework that comes into our office, Mr. Speaker, is about social assistance. This government, if you look at the budget plans, have 100 fewer people working in the Department of Social Services. Again, so this government is willing to fully staff to its absolute complement Executive Council but not willing to staff the people providing front-line services and social services, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you what this'll look like in Saskatoon Riversdale. Already, even without the loss of these 100 people, there is a hard and difficult, it's a difficult experience getting services for our constituents, Mr. Speaker. At one time, just a month ago actually, my constituency noted for me that there is only one supervisor in the Saskatoon Social Services office, that there were several caseworkers who were no longer in the employ of the ministry. We couldn't, as much as we were trying to get responses from people in Social Services to get pressing, pressing matters — people who are living so, so close to the line, Mr. Speaker, who are desperate — and we are unable to get quick, prompt answers because of staffing, Mr. Speaker. So we have some grave concerns about 100 fewer positions in Social Services. These are the people providing the front-line work to our citizens, Mr. Speaker. And that is a real problem.

Another thing that, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to talk about, Mr. Speaker. I would like to chat a little bit about child care spaces. I know that everybody in this Assembly knows that that's near and dear to my heart as a mom of young children, who has many friends who have young children. Child care is front and centre in our lives, Mr. Speaker, whether we choose to be at home with our kids, making sure that they're well cared for, or whether or not we decide that we, whether we choose to or have to go out into the paid labour force to provide for our family, child care is front and centre.

So this government has committed to creating 500 more spaces. Is that good, Mr. Speaker? Yes. Yes, Mr. Speaker, 500 spaces is good. But I can tell you that the francophone child care in Saskatchewan right now, just in the francophone community, just in the francophone community, Mr. Speaker, there's a wait-list of 300 spaces across the province that they need that will eat this right up, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that we heard about just a week and a half ago from the people who are on the front lines of child care here in Saskatchewan, is you can create as many spaces as you want, Mr. Speaker, but if you don't have the staff to support those spaces, what's the point? The reality is recruitment and retention is a huge, huge issue. And when you are making as much money working in child care as you are at working at Tim Hortons or Wal-Mart, that is a problem. The people we are entrusting our children to earning barely above minimum wage, who often have families themselves, Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable.

So again I need to point to our neighbours to the east, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba has close to 30,000 child care spaces. How did they, how did they get there, Mr. Speaker? How did they get there, Mr. Speaker? They got there by having a plan.

Actually they're in the middle of their second five-year plan, Mr. Speaker. They didn't just target creating more spaces. They targeted creating a sustainable system that worked for families and worked for people who worked in the industry, Mr. Speaker. That's what they did. So right now, here in Saskatchewan, we are working with an outdated subsidy system. We don't have enough money for families. There's far too much bureaucracy.

I don't know if the members opposite have any clue how child care works, with the exception of perhaps the minister. They're laughing, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious issue for many, many people here in this province, Mr. Speaker, who want to be employed, who want to get an education but can't, don't have the confidence in the child care system. They are relying on care that people shouldn't have to rely on, Mr. Speaker. They need to know that when they are going to school or to work that their children are in the best possible hands, Mr. Speaker, and that creates better employees, Mr. Speaker.

So just to give these government, these members opposite a little lesson in how it works in terms of the bureaucracy. So every child care centre has a list, Mr. Speaker, of its families. Every month there is a director who fills out an attendance card for every day that that family has a subsidy and doesn't have a subsidy. There's an attendance card, Mr. Speaker, that gets manually filled out that gets shipped off to Regina where the subsidy worker then has to input that somewhere. There is a huge amount of bureaucracy, Mr. Speaker.

We need to . . . this child care system doesn't need to be tinkered with, it needs to be completely overhauled, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have workers whose wages and working conditions aren't enough to keep them in the field, Mr. Speaker. So again, there is no point increasing spaces if you don't have the staff to support them — the trained, qualified staff to do that.

So when you've got subsidy workers who are supporting, I've been told up to 400 families, the subsidy workers, an individual subsidy worker is responsible for about 400 families. There is no wonder that it takes months, Mr. Speaker, sometimes to find out if you're eligible for a subsidy. And then what ends up happening is child care centres end up carrying debt when a family finds out that they don't get the subsidy and they've just had their child in the child care for a month, and then they pull their child out of child care because they can't pay the bill. It is hugely problematic.

So for this government to not acknowledge that there are some very real issues with the child care system, and I urge them to talk to parents, to talk to families, to talk to the people who work in the industry and come up with a real made-in-Saskatchewan plan reflecting our Saskatchewan values that service Saskatchewan families the way they deserve to be, the kind of services they need and deserve to have, Mr. Speaker.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if we didn't talk about the film employment tax credit tonight. This has been something that we've been raising since the budget last week, the cut to the film employment tax credit which will see, Mr. Speaker, many, many people in this community who make their living off the

film employment . . . off of the film and television industry, having to go to places like Manitoba, BC [British Columbia], Toronto, other jurisdictions who are willing to participate in the world market of the film industry, Mr. Speaker.

I think the best quote I heard today, or yesterday, was in order to be competitive, if you want to be competitive, Mr. Speaker . . . I shouldn't, I actually am not going to quote that quote because I don't have it in front of me and I wouldn't want to do an injustice to Norm Bolen. So I don't have it in front of me and I don't want to do his quote injustice, but the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is this government has decided it doesn't want to be competitive, Mr. Speaker. The reality is, the film and television industry, 70 per cent of money in the film and television industry comes from out of province, Mr. Speaker. These are new dollars, money that's not here in Saskatchewan. And those companies that come to Saskatchewan invest in Saskatchewan employees who pay taxes here, Mr. Speaker. The people who work in the film and television industry here in Saskatchewan pay taxes here in Saskatchewan. They buy houses, Mr. Speaker. They work and volunteer on community boards. They're members of this community, and they deserve to have this support, Mr. Speaker.

So this is very much about economic development. It's about positive benefit for the people of Saskatchewan. It's about jobs, economic spinoff, pride of places. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I think it feels pretty good for all of us when we see our landscapes, when we see Saskatchewan on the screen or we see our neighbours or the Premier making a cameo on Corner Gas. It's kind of cool, Mr. Speaker, and not only when we see that ourselves but when we have a chance to share that on the world stage, Mr. Speaker.

The film industry, Mr. Speaker, is about . . . This tax credit that this government is cutting, for every dollar this government spends, it gets six back in production value. And that doesn't even include spinoff, whether it's the lumberyards, the gas that people are buying at gas stations, the money that's being spent on accommodations, and food, Mr. Speaker, at restaurants, catering companies. The spinoff benefits are enormous, Mr. Speaker.

But you know what? I can say all these words, and it doesn't seem to ring true for the members opposite. But I'd like to read a few stories into the record, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps would. These are people who are residents and voters of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and are citizens and deserve to be treated with respect, Mr. Speaker. So I'd like to read a few things here, Mr. Speaker.

So this is from the petition that this morning was at more than 7,000 signatures, Mr. Speaker. The petition started up on Friday afternoon. As of about noon today, there were more than 7,000 speakers.

So we have Greg Wensel, Sask Party supporter and business teacher: "This decision does not hold water." Amelia Rogers supported the Sask Party: "feels like you slapped our family in the face." Ian Rogers:

Remember me Premier Wall? The guy that shot your Christmas Message. Thanks to the SFETC, I've had a

successful 25 yr. career in the province of my birth, the province I love. Raised a family here. Hoped to retire here. Now I will be forced to follow the producers that leave if I want to continue working on the world-class documentaries that I've been so lucky to be a part of. Merry Christmas to you too.

Mr. Speaker, Shane Chapman, Sask Party supporter: "very disappointing, please reconsider." Meet Doug Russell, dad, volunteer, editor, TV spots for Riders, Rawlco, and you. Now what? So those are just a few little snippets, Mr. Speaker, from the petition, but I do have some letters, Mr. Speaker. I do have some letters that I'd like to read into the record, Mr. Speaker, that I think are quite important.

This comes from Andrea Menard, which I think many of us are familiar with and quite proud of here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So I won't read entire letters here because they are quite lengthy, but some excerpts, Mr. Speaker. So this is from Andrea Menard:

I don't understand how the government can justify cutting a program that has generated over \$500 million of production in our province and has fuelled not just the film communities, creative and technical trades, but the wider community as well. I am a proud Métis actor, singer, and screenwriter whose national and international reputation have done Saskatchewan proud. I've been an ambassador for Saskatchewan because of the very fact that my creations could be produced here, my voice could be nurtured, developed, and produced here. Many people across this country and abroad are now aware of the existence of my culture and our Prairie world view because my province invested in its film and television community, who in turn invested in me.

What other voices are waiting in the wings? Whose valuable world view will be silenced if this government chooses to cut the lifeline that brings valuable work to our province? The cut to this program will devastate the livelihood of thousands of film industry employees as well as a booming industry.

This letter, Mr. Speaker, is from Dawn Bird:

Last year after receiving the response I got from Hon. Bill Hutchinson, I was mostly satisfied and went on to have a very fruitful year. I was one of the fortunate who managed to work a good 9 months out of the year. This was very rewarding for me and my family and I was convinced the following year would be just as rewarding, if not better. Having said that, my husband and I decided to try for another baby and we planned the pregnancy around the film industry. I planned to be in my third trimester during the slowest time of the film season so that I would not miss much work and figured by the time I had the baby, things would only just be picking up. Our beautiful baby girl was born just three weeks ago.

My husband (God bless him) is currently taking paternity leave from his place of employment (RCMP Depot) so that I can continue to work within the film industry. Also, I am set to produce a full length feature film in the fall and

have been in collaboration with a local writer to try and get another television series off the ground. On top of all this, I am also in the process of acquiring a local office space for my expanding production company, B.E.ZEE. PRODUCTIONS.

I am only one person, but think of how pulling the tax credit is going to drastically affect just MY family! Clearly, without the tax credit . . . I will not be working in the film industry like I had hoped and my husband basically took a cut in wages and took paternity leave for nothing. Secondly, there will be no point in establishing a business location for my Company; and please tell me who exactly is going to be working on the film and television series I have planned when everyone in the industry will have basically moved out of Province???

PLEASE . . . think of the thousands of people this is affecting. It's NOT just the film industry people . . . it's the people that support the film industry too. Restaurants, gas stations, hotels, truck rentals, clothing stores & dozens more!

Mr. Speaker, this is a letter, and I know this is lengthy, Mr. Speaker, but I think it's important to have this on the record. These are the folks who have been in the galleries, who have been a part of the action here to help the government see that they've made a grave mistake, and I think their voices speak louder and more clearly than mine, Mr. Speaker.

This, Mr. Speaker, is from Eil McEachern. She says here:

I am writing to you to resign my position within the Saskatchewan film and television industry.

I was born and raised in rural Saskatchewan. I suppose I never gave up on my career aspirations, in part, because of my farm background and the rural work ethic that we are all so proud of. After receiving my B.Comm from the U of S, I chose to stay in Saskatchewan even though the majority of my fellow graduates were heading to Ontario and Alberta to work for Proctor and Gamble and other large multinationals. As luck would have it, I found a career in an industry that allowed me to use both my strength with numbers and my creativity — film and television production and finance. I got this lucky break in 1999. Turns out that the introduction of the Saskatchewan film employment tax credit created a boom in the film and television industry in Saskatchewan. Not only was I able to stay in Saskatchewan, but I was able to remain in Saskatoon.

I've been employed full-time in this industry for over a decade. I've gotten married, had a son, bought a house, bought another property, sent my son to school. Unfortunately the marriage didn't work out — that's not really the point of this letter, but it does matter to me that I am a single income household with a young child to raise. In my decade in the film industry, I've built up some expertise in film and television financing and tax credit programs. I find some of the statistics being posted in your press releases to be a bit curious, and not accurately reflecting my experiences in this industry.

For example, I know that tax credit dollars are only paid out based on the amount of money that we bring in to the province and spend here. There are actually guidelines around it, minimums in place to ensure that enough money is coming in to offset whatever dollars are going out. I know very well that we, as producers, carry the cost of financing the tax credits for 18 to 24 months at a minimum. That is because the tax credits are only paid out long after we have brought the money into the province and spent it here. It's unfortunate, because this lag makes it appear as though the tax credits are not directly linked to production revenues. For example, tax credits on the production year 2008-09 are probably paid out in 2011-12 [Mr. Speaker]. You have the tax credits from a good year being paid out in a year when production is declining. That is a skewed picture, if the facts are not accurately presented.

That's all a bit technical though. I guess this is the real point. If Saskatchewan becomes the only province in Canada to be without a film tax credit, the industry here will die. It doesn't matter that you are still putting money into the Soundstage. No business person in their right mind would bring a production to a province that is more expensive to shoot in than its neighbours (in fact, it reminds me of oil and gas royalties and tax structures — all you have to do to encourage investment in oil and gas in Saskatchewan is to be more competitive than Alberta. We did that, right?) It will become prohibitively expensive for production companies to exist here if all their production is happening in another province. So on that note, it is with much regret that I must tender my resignation as a Saskatchewan resident, and a tax-paying member of the film and television industry, if you insist on standing behind your decision to eliminate the Saskatchewan Film Employment Tax Credit.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, I have many, many more. Actually I'm sure the Sask Party government members also have many because I've been cc'd on many, many, many, many, many emails, Mr. Speaker, and letters. Many, many, many speakers . . . I'm sure the Minister of the Environment could tell us all about the many letters that he's also received. He's the former Culture minister, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure he made a valiant effort around the cabinet table. Well I don't actually believe that, Mr. Speaker, but you never know.

What I do know is the current minister, by his responses in question period, clearly didn't make a very strong argument at the cabinet table, Mr. Speaker, for his own ministry, Mr. Speaker.

So there are, there are a number . . . You know what? I'm going to read one more into the record here, Mr. Speaker. I would like to read them all, but we would be here for a couple days, I think. So sadly I don't have quite enough time to do that. So this is from Daniel, Mr. Speaker:

I am born and raised in Saskatchewan and went to the University of Saskatchewan in order to get my BFA in Acting. I've been a supporter of the arts every since. My

family comes from a business/farming background so they were at first unsure that I had a future as an artist in the province. I proved them wrong by getting involved in the Sask film industry and working hard to get to the top of my field in Stunt Coordination. It was very possible to make a good living in the film industry for me. Now, sadly, I may have to give up this career path. Without the tax credit, production dollars will go to other provinces. I am unable/unwilling to leave this province because of my roots and other businesses, and am therefore unable to pursue the career I've always dreamed of. I will have a VERY hard time working in other provinces, as they STILL have their tax credits which encourages them to hire people from THEIR provinces. Many artists and technicians will have to leave the province permanently to work, or stay here and switch careers. I care about this industry and my province.

Mr. Speaker, you know what? I'm going to read one more into the record just because I know these members opposite are perhaps learning a whole bunch about the film employment tax credit, Mr. Speaker. And they're understanding, I hope, and seeing that perhaps they can find a clear path to ensuring that this industry grows and thrives, Mr. Speaker. Quote . . . This is, pardon me, this is from Mark:

In addition to being a taxpayer, home owner, and father of three, I am an actor. I've never expected to earn a full-time living in Saskatchewan's film and television industry, so I've continue to take on other work so that I can pay my bills, look after my kids, and live as a responsible citizen in a province I have come to love and call home.

I respect the importance of a balanced budget and, for the most part, I have been very impressed with your government's work in areas such as health care. I am not a partisan thinker and I appreciate good government carried out by any political party.

However, I am writing to you today because, like the hundreds and thousands of other Saskatchewan residents who work full-time or part-time in film and television, I feel betrayed and utterly disregarded by your government. And I would suggest that if you really want to lead Saskatchewan toward becoming a prosperous, cosmopolitan 21st century province, you might want to stop beating up on the film and television Industry and the Saskatchewan people who work in it. Your policies in this area are chasing people out of the province — creative, talented people who love Saskatchewan, love their Saskatchewan families and friends, and really don't want to move. People who contribute to the life of this province every bit as much as the farmer, miner, driller, and health care worker.

The short-term budget saving achieved by killing the tax credit will be far outweighed by the price of killing off an entire industry and the price of trying to rebuild it if and when your government finally comes to its senses. It's not too late to change this decision.

Good government is about so much more than money,

Mr. Wall.

Pardon me. That's in a quote. I can say that, can't I?

Good government is about so much more than money . . . It's about ensuring a quality of life and an abundance of opportunity for the people who call Saskatchewan home. It's about having an open, inclusive spirit that values our province's culture, stories, and talent. I'm not asking you to jeopardize the province's finances or triple its investment in film and television. I'm only asking you not to take away the livelihoods of Saskatchewan citizens and not to ensure that talented young filmmakers and actors continue to be a prominent Saskatchewan export.

This is a short-sighted, misguided, and ill-informed decision. This is not good government. Please, reverse this decision.

Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, is again every dollar invested in this film employment tax credit produced six in production value. We know that, Mr. Speaker, every dollar invested produced six in production value, and that doesn't include all the spinoff as well, Mr. Speaker.

Film tax credits are not just the making of social democratic governments, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to draw everyone's attention, Mr. Speaker, to what the British government did actually less than a week ago. They introduced a tax credit for million dollar-plus budgeted TV shows. I'm just going to actually read from an article. I'm going to read from an article that appeared in *The Hollywood Reporter*, Mr. Speaker. It says:

Disney and HBO were both name-checked as two major companies the British government hopes to lure to U.K. shores to shoot high-end television shows with the introduction of a tax credit.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, delivering his annual budget speech, said the government aims to bring in a tax credit to cover video games, animation and high-end TV program production.

The aim would be to stop British TV programs such as *Birdsong*, starring Eddie Redmayne, Matthew Goode, and Clemence Poesy and banked by NBCUniversal and Working Title TV from shooting abroad [Mr. Speaker].

So this, Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes this is about money in, not money out. This Premier today in a scrum basically has said, this Premier today in a scrum basically said, basically said, we don't want your money from abroad, Mr. Speaker. They said, we don't want your foreign investment here in Saskatchewan. We want local investment.

Local investment's great, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is about 70 per cent of money in the film and television industry here in Saskatchewan comes from elsewhere, Mr. Speaker. So I think this government needs to do some rethinking about the film employment tax credit. Clearly they are offside on this one, and I hope that they can see their way clear in the next month or two, sooner than that, Mr. Speaker. There are people who are glad that the delay of the film employment tax credit or the cut

has been extended until June, but the reality is that basically gives people time to pack, Mr. Speaker. They will get their season in this summer, but they will not have an opportunity to think about a future here, Mr. Speaker. They need to know that the home that they own, do they need to list now when more properties tend to sell? These are folks who may or may not have a career come, here in Saskatchewan, in a year from now, Mr. Speaker.

So this government needs to get to work and not tell them in three months from now what's going on but sit down . . . I'd like to hear the minister or the Premier say that they've scheduled a meeting for tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, to start ironing this out. It's absolutely imperative. Right now we're sending a message around the world. The film and television industry is a global industry, Mr. Speaker, and we're right now sending a message around the world that we don't want foreign investment, Mr. Speaker. So this has to turn around.

Just on one other quick note around arts and culture, the reality is I know that being a part of the creative economy is a very good thing. It's incredibly important, Mr. Speaker. Do we want to be a part of the creative economy here? I think we do. I think our natural resource extraction is great, but being diversified is absolutely imperative. The things that make . . . It's not just about . . . The reality is culture is and should be a big part of who we are here in Saskatchewan.

We look at expenditures in the budget, whether it's the Arts Board who has been capped at the same amount of funding here, Mr. Speaker, a lack of an increase is the same as a cut, Mr. Speaker. The reality is the lack of an increase is the same as a cut. When you have cost of living increases, you've got salaries to keep pace with and benefits. When you don't get an increase, you are for all intents and purposes making a cut, Mr. Speaker.

We heard yesterday that the Western Development Museum again is feeling the pinch and feels no, they didn't get a decrease, but they feel as if they've had a cut. And they've now had to make some decisions about closing their facilities on Mondays to Saskatchewan residents and people coming into Saskatchewan as tourists who want to learn about our Saskatchewan story which the Western Development Museums do very well, Mr. Speaker. So those are just between the film employment tax credit, which has been on the minds of all of us here for the last week, but there are other areas in culture that have not been well supported either, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. I have stacks of letters, but I know that my colleagues, I have colleagues who would like to wade into the debate here tonight. So with that, I will be supporting the amendment and I will not be supporting the budget.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to address this House and reply to this balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, I've been a little under the weather and I hope that I don't channel Tommy the barking seal and bark my hole. So

I'm going to apologize in advance if I start to sputter. So thank you.

It's been a little more than four months since the election, and in that time it's certainly been a whirlwind. I wondered whether what I heard in the constituents of Coronation Park on the doorsteps would reflect the concerns post-election. Mr. Speaker, the people of Coronation Park want to see themselves reflected in the budget. They want to know that they have been heard and there is a document that understands the day-to-day struggles that working people are facing. They said, don't forget about us.

Mr. Speaker, I've been out in the community and continue to listen and ask for opinions. That being said, I have some people to thank. Thank you to the constituents of Coronation Park, the family and friends, the legislative staff and caucus staff who have made my transition into the building seamless. I would also like to thank my co-workers for their selfless assistance. This is after all a large building, and your assistance has been greatly appreciated. I'd also like to thank my constituency assistant, Kalee Kent, for her tireless efforts in getting our office set up and her excellent rapport with the community. Well done, Kalee.

As part of our government's election platform, our priority was to ensure that the quality of life for people with disabilities improves in this province. I am always cognizant of the struggles that people are facing with disabilities and I was extremely hopeful that there would be a reflection of disability enhancements in the budget. Mr. Speaker, the 2012-13 budget makes an investment of \$26.4 million for new or enhanced programming and increased program utilization.

An increase of \$17.8 million is provided to expand the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program, the SAID program. The total program will cost \$113 million in 2012-13. It will expand the number of clients from 3,000 up to 10,000 adults. Mr. Speaker, these enhancements are proof of this government's commitment to people with disabilities.

I had the opportunity to visit the constituents of Huston Heights in Argyle Park for a birthday party and also for a chili night. This is a residence for adults with physical disabilities who are living independently.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, the residents anxiously looked on and awaited the budget in hopes that they would see some recognition of their monthly struggles to make ends meet. They described in great detail their struggles to make ends meet and are truly struggling month to month. The look on their faces when they received the news of the enhancements to the SAID program were truly humbling. I was proud to be able, proud to provide the news that there would be enhancements to the program, and they thanked us as a government for this initiative. Mr. Speaker, there were tears of joy in that room and now their lives are just a little bit more hopeful.

Some of the specifics of this budget for people who are in residential care settings, they're going to receive another \$40 a month, increasing to \$100 a month in the next four years.

Single individuals living independently will receive an increase of \$200 a month, expanding to over . . . expanding to \$350. Couples living independently will receive \$230 a month, expanding to an average of \$400 a month.

As further evidence of disability enhancements, the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living, the SAIL program, will receive an increase of \$1.5 million to maintain benefits for people with long-term disabilities or illnesses. This program provides support such as orthotics, prosthetics, rehab mobility equipment, oxygen, insulin pumps for children. Mr. Speaker, these announcements resonated with my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, the children and youth agenda was launched in the '11-12 budget and brought together a number of programs from across government under one umbrella. The intention is to find new and innovative ways to approach the key social determinants of health and well-being at a very early age. It's further enhanced in this budget with another \$6 million. Some of these initiatives include a \$1 million enhancement to the autism spectrum disorder therapies, \$600,000 increase for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention services, \$500,000 to continue 20 literacy camps for underprivileged youth, \$3 million for a new risk assessment tool for child protection workers.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of the child and youth agenda has greatly improved relationships with First Nations agencies and it's built new partnerships and improved services to families and children. First Nations agencies were provided \$3.9 million annually to support case management and service delivery for First Nations child welfare authorities. Efforts are being taken to find placements for children with extended family and with First Nations agencies on-reserve so that the children can remain in the community. This approach has contributed to an increase in the number of children placed in extended family both on- and off-reserve. The result is a steady decline in the number of children that are coming into care of the ministry.

I was honoured to be in attendance at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for FoxValley Counseling Services. FoxValley Counseling provides services to assist individuals and families based on need. Programs are tailored and therefore more meaningful and personal to the individuals they are serving. FoxValley Counseling provides its clients with options such as mediation, elder services, individual family counselling, talking circles, healing circles. All these services are in response to needs identified by First Nation members themselves. And this partnership will truly enhance family systems within Regina and region.

Mr. Speaker, there are other initiatives and enhancements to the child and youth agenda, and these include \$1.15 million to 20 out-of-home residential care spaces and infant care centre; \$41 million increase for intensive family supports; three-quarters of a million dollar increase for home assessments and treatment foster care delivered by community-based organizations; \$500,000 increase for visitation and supervision for children, delivered again by community-based organizations.

Continuing on the subject of youth, Mr. Speaker, I was truly humbled to be at another ribbon-cutting ceremony, in particular the funds that have been provided by the Ministry of Social

Services to Street Culture Kidz project. The funds provided to Street Culture is for the operation of the province's first voluntary emergency youth shelter. This 15-bed coed facility provides a first stop for youth without immediate housing option and will provide a safe, respectful environment while ensuring basic needs for up to 30 days, and providing a plan for follow-up services. It is indeed unfortunate that youth find themselves in unsafe and uncertain circumstances, but there is a need for such a service and Street Culture will help to fill this gap. I had the opportunity to talk with some youth in the shelter and they were truly appreciative and thankful for the help in receiving, and in leaving the dangers of the street, truly thankful to this government.

Mr. Speaker, the 2012-13 budget is also about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage: balanced budgets, growing economy, government services that are affordable and sustainable in the long run. Around the world we're seeing the chaos caused by governments that do not live within their means. Saskatchewan's economy and our finances are in much better shape. That's the Saskatchewan advantage. This budget is keeping the Saskatchewan advantage by keeping our budget balanced, by keeping our spending sustainable, by keeping our economy strong and growing, and by keeping the promises we made in the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, this budget goes a long way to ensuring that the province's most vulnerable are further assisted. It is often said, a society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable. With that in mind, our government is continuing to take action to better meet the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. Starting April 1st, 2012, we're changing the way we fund day programs to one based on actual needs of each individual. This will allow us to devote more resources to support people that have more complex needs. Through these and other programs, we're working to ensure that Saskatchewan is the best place to live in Canada for people with intellectual disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, on the topic of education, the enhanced commitment to education in this province is indeed applauded. These enhancements include the new funding formula and recognition of the importance of education — truly welcomed by my constituents. When asked if this government believes in education, now the answer is a resounding yes.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit schools within my constituency, and on a visit to Coronation Park School I got to visit three classrooms: grades 1's, 4's, and 8's. Grade 1's didn't know why I was there, but they certainly knew what the castle in the park was. The grade 8's were a little more reserved but had interesting questions through the social studies course, but by far the most interesting questions came from the grade 4's. I said they could ask me anything, and, Mr. Speaker, they truly took me at my word.

The boys peppered me with sport questions ranging from what my favourite teams are to my favourite players and, do you actually know the member from Regina Dewdney? And by the way, member, thanks for promising to come to the school after. Then it was the girls' turn to ask questions. They wanted to know, is your job fun? Well yes it is. What's your favourite colour? Green. Then a girl in the front row turned around and says, do you like dragons? I said, now there's only one possible

way to answer that question and that's, well yes I do. She follows that up with, do you even like the fire-breathing ones? And I said again, yes I do. You can find good in all creatures, young lady, and I just think that fire-breathing dragons are misunderstood and they just want to be friends. She said, I think so too.

Mr. Speaker, one of the government's principles is a strong safety net which protects those truly in need of support while encouraging individuals to become self-sufficient. I've already touched on that principle and cited examples that are imbedded in this budget.

Another principle is individual freedom and equality of opportunity for all citizens. Mr. Speaker, I believe the rental incentive for housing speaks to this very principle. Specifically the rental incentive is in place to encourage construction of new multi-unit rental housing projects. Government is introducing an incentive to encourage private sector investment. The incentive is a corporate income tax rebate equal to 10 per cent of the rental income generated from newly constructed multi-unit rental projects for a period of up to 10 years. This rebate, when combined with other housing initiatives, is expected to encourage the construction of an additional 10,000 new rental units in the province. In addition, Sask Housing Corp is going to provide \$1 million for Habitat for Humanity to help an additional 20 low-income families achieve home ownership.

Mr. Speaker, in order to thrive and be a full citizen, there are a few components that are required. These components are housing, employment, and education. It is vital that these components do not function in isolation because they have a dependent relationship. You need housing in order to succeed in education. You need employment in order to afford housing. One cannot truly function without the three in harmony, and this budget has encapsulated those concepts.

We are a have province, with record population growth and opportunities unprecedented in our history. Our vision: Saskatchewan will be the best place in Canada to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family, and to build a life.

The government has identified four new goals to set direction for the province: sustaining growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people, improving our quality of life, making life more affordable, and delivering responsive and responsible government.

In order to fulfill this vision and set this direction, you need a benchmark of resources and an investment climate that provides a growth plan and incentives. Our province is blessed with many natural resources — abundant energy supplies, diverse mineral deposits, and a large land base that continues to grow high-quality grains and oilseeds. To help manage this growth, we've seen a strong net migration rate that has been growing due to a combination of both international and interprovincial initiatives. This is in combination with the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, that'll conclude my remarks, and I am supporting this budget and not supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — To ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Rosemont has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, seated in your gallery here this evening I have two very special guests that have joined me here this evening that I'd like to introduce. I'd like to start off with introducing Ms. Gloria Patrick and Miss Kaitlyn Patrick. Now Gloria is the constituency assistant for Regina Rosemont, and I'm blessed to work with Gloria. She has such a special way with the constituents of Rosemont — empathetic, hard-working, determined to finding outcomes.

Gloria's background, her education is in both social work and in English studies, Mr. Speaker, and she's worked in shelters, worked in protection. And she came to us after she was the executive director of the Core Ritchie community association, so she's a great pickup in our office and serves our constituents so well. So I'm so pleased to welcome Gloria here.

But I'm also very pleased to welcome her daughter Kaitlyn here. And Kaitlyn's a grade 7 student at St. Mary's School here in Regina. She is a fantastic piano player, an accomplished basketball player, a great jazz dancer, bit of hip hop, pretty talented girl all the way around. And I know tonight, Mr. Speaker, she has a little bit of homework in math yet here this evening, so I should conclude my remarks and let her get to that.

They came in to meet with me briefly here tonight, and I just want to thank both of them for the support they provide to our constituency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

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.]

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, there's a few thank yous I would like to do. I would like to once again thank the voters of the beautiful Batoche

constituency. I would also like to thank my board of directors who've been so devoted and with me all the way. I thank them very much for their time and their effort. I would also like to thank team Telfer, Don and Mary Anne, who run my office. Fantastic people and I much appreciate their help, their assistance, and the time they offer us. Once again I would also like to thank my wife, my partner, my friend, my confidant who always stands by my side.

I would also like to thank the Premier, the member from Swift Current, and the Finance minister, the member from Canora-Pelly, for their leadership in bringing this fantastic budget to fruition. Also I would like to thank all the members of the Sask Party. It's a fantastic team and . . .

An Hon. Member: — Is that all of us?

Mr. Kirsch: — You betcha. It's even including you, yes. Thank you one and all and also thank you to our office staff.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for my speech. It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on this year's budget. This is the Saskatchewan Party government's fifth balanced budget. And like the last four, I'm very proud of the results. The people of Saskatchewan have been very, very pleased with the last four budgets judging by their endorsement on November 7th.

The only ones that have a problem with the last four budgets have also had a problem on November 7th. So where does the problem lie? With the budget or with the NDP? Mr. Speaker, I would suggest, if I may be so bold, that the problem lies with the NDP and their politically blind followers. The member of Regina Rosemont, as the opposition Finance critic, is following in the path of his mentor, the late and not so great former leader of the NDP, long gone Dwain, and his philosophy of not letting the facts get in the way of spinning a political story.

[20:15]

For the past four budgets, the member of Regina Rosemont has wailed and hollered that the budget is not balanced. Like a child having a temper tantrum, waving and yelling because he didn't get his way, so he's going to cause a scene. For the last four years, the member of Regina Rosemont has demanded the budget be balanced two ways, both General Revenue Fund and summary financial statement, something the NDP never, ever did. So this year, just to put a little smile on his face, we balanced the budget both ways. Mr. Speaker, did it make him smile? Or did he say, thank you, good job? No, Mr. Speaker. As a true apostle of the doctrine of Dwain, he said the budget was not up to his delusional standards and rejected it totally. Mr. Speaker, he couldn't find one item, not one line in this budget, that he approved of. Mr. Speaker, using his, shall we say, questionable accounting practice, I can show you 16 consecutive unbalanced NDP budgets. One year the NDP even used a credit card-like style to balance the books.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is balanced. Like a man on a tightrope, we've even calculated for the winds of change. This is a balanced budget, probably the only one in Canada and most likely all of North America.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have not backed away from any of their

election promises. The number is somewhere in, and/or about, well maybe kind of, or something like, well maybe 4, 5 billion over and above the provincial budget. I would respectfully ask the member for Regina Rosemont, where would you get that kind of money from? You have two choices. You would either go much deeper into debt or like past NDP governments you would say, election promises are just election promises. Nothing more. They were never meant to be kept.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are done with that. They are smarter than that, and they will no longer tolerate such abuse. They demand better, and they received better on November of 2007 and even louder on November of 2011. I would say to the member from Regina Rosemont, you can't suck and blow at the same time. This is either a balanced budget or it isn't. You can't have it both ways.

While in the rotunda after the speeches, I was listening to comments about the budget. They were very positive, and I was pleased to hear them. The comment that said the most, and I heard it twice, was the comment not about the budget but about the NDP reply to the budget. The comment was, what planet is he from? When our province is doing the best it has done in 60 years, how can he be so negative? It's really sad.

Mr. Speaker, our province is really gaining admiration and respect across Canada and on the world stage. It is wonderful to witness this great transformation from a wee province under the NDP to the resource rich have province that has become the envy of the nation. Even our small rural communities have felt and see the change. They are proud of the new Saskatchewan.

In my own constituency of Batoche, we are seeing changes — changes that a short time ago under the NDP weren't happening. Now there is hope. Now there is optimism. Now there is a new bridge being built at St. Louis. Now there's a new school being built in Duck Lake. Now there's the twinning of Highway 11 to Prince Albert and will be completed this year. Now Highway 368 is a highway again. Now we see the access road to Cudworth from No. 2 Highway being rebuilt. Now we see the Wakaw Lake road up for rebuilding this year. Now we see a short stretch of No. 20 Highway to Middle Lake being rebuilt. Now we see a new daycare centre in Lake Lenore. Finally we see surgical wait times being shortened. We will be adding 8,000 surgeries this year. Truly an amazing step forward and much needed.

Now we see provincial income tax being lowered. For a single person with an income of 25,000, we see tax savings of over \$800 since we became government in 2007. For a family of four with an income of 50,000, we see a savings of over 2,600 since 2007. Also we see low-income seniors getting a large boost. The end of this term, their income will have tripled from what it was when we first took office.

The people of Batoche like what they see. They know we need more, but they see progress and a brighter tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, the page has been turned, and the people of Batoche are never going back. Saskatchewan is the new promised land.

Mr. Speaker, the job of the opposition is to oppose bad legislation, not all legislation. If a Bill is good for Saskatchewan, they could endorse it and help improve this

province for all its people. But what we see here daily, the opposition hasn't read that far yet in Her Majesty's operator's manual to being a good opposition. Surely in four years, as satisfied as the people of Saskatchewan are, we must have brought forward some good legislation. The people of this province have unequivocally endorsed the Saskatchewan Party's policy. The NDP have demonstrated they will keep on opposing all legislation, even the right legislation that will advance our province.

Mr. Speaker, our government has stated that we would add three more seats in the legislature by the next election in order to better serve our growing population. We are presently at 58 seats, so that would bring us up to 61 seats. Considering we were once at 66 seats with a much smaller population, this seems very reasonable. The opposition says that three more seats will cost not just 1 million but millions of dollars more for the Saskatchewan taxpayer. Our government has stated that the cost will be no higher than when the NDP were in power. We are operating a more efficient government, thus we would not incur an additional cost.

Mr. Speaker, not all of any budget is gold, and some hard choices had to be made. It was a very difficult decision, but the decision was made to wind down the film employment tax credit. It's all about balancing a budget. Not surprisingly the NDP opposed this part of the budget. What is surprising is when asked by a CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] reporter, the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Regina Lakeview, replied without hesitation he would take the money from agriculture and municipalities. He then said the government is forgetting how much money is generated in the film industry. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is forgetting how much money is generated in the agriculture industry, and how vital agriculture is to our economy.

Agriculture is not only important to our economy; it is the cornerstone of our economy. I would like the entire opposition to listen very closely to the words of Daniel Webster, the father of Webster's dictionary, a very wise and learned man. He said, society is based on agriculture. When agriculture flourishes, all the arts follow. I would like to say that again in case anyone missed it: when agriculture flourishes, all the arts follow.

Agriculture is not just a budget line item. It is what we are. With 47 per cent of Canada's cropland, we are the nation's food producers — not only this nation but the world's food supplier. The Prairies have been referred to as the breadbasket of the world. Any nation that cannot produce its own food is at the mercy of world markets. The men and women of agriculture have dealt with hail, fire, insects, blight, BSE, drought, floods, and all forms of adverse weather conditions. Farmers work the land, struggle and toil against many adverse conditions, and still stand proud.

By far the biggest adversity that they had to overcome is 16 years of NDP rule. This meant 16 years of program cuts, 16 years of neglect and crumbling roads, higher and higher taxes, and empty promises. Our agriculture community has to be competitive in extremely challenging world markets, and with government support, we can be on the cutting edge of the future of agriculture. All they ask is our support and respect. We, the Saskatchewan Party government, are supporting them because

it is the right thing to do. The NDP have time and time again criticized their agriculture policies. They did nothing for 16 years and the comments of their leader to CTV removed any shadow of a doubt as to where they really stand. For them, agriculture is just a political tool they can wave around to try and make political points.

In the past, the NDP have divided this province into rural and urban. They would try to do it again. They have no qualms about splitting rural and urban if they see political gain. The strength of this province is in staying united, and this government stands for all of Saskatchewan from north to south, east to west, rural or urban.

Mr. Speaker, for all of the above reasons, and for many more, it gives me great pleasure to support the Saskatchewan Party government's 2012 budget and to reject the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased tonight to be able to join this budget debate, and certainly in helping to ensure that the theme of the budget, *Keeping the Saskatchewan Advantage*, remains the key focal point not simply for this debate but actually for the duration of this year as we work on behalf of the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't start by paying homage to the people of Saskatoon Greystone. And I remain very humbled and honoured by the opportunity to continue to serve as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for this wonderful riding.

I would also be remiss if I didn't thank several of those that helped to ensure that I can continue to focus on the work at hand on behalf of the Premier and behalf of the people of Saskatoon Greystone: to my family, to my wife, Martha, and to our daughter Jacqueline, our wonderful daughter, a special vote of thanks for your continued support.

Jacqueline is in grade 7 this year at the Saskatoon French School. She's also just been promoted to lance corporal within the North Saskatchewan Regiment's army cadets, that's the 2293 Royal Canadian Army Cadets. She's a soccer player in the East Side Youth Soccer Association, and she also plays the violin. But most especially, I am so very proud of her for she continues to teach me some very humbling lessons about ways to see the world with fresh eyes and an open mind.

I'd also like to thank my mom and dad, Bud and Elaine, as well as my sister Leah and my grandmother, Sheila, who continues to be an inspiration in my life.

A great team of volunteers came together, led by two very talented Co-Chairs and a great team, and really helped to drive a successful election in Saskatoon Greystone. And some would say that's despite the candidate that they were working on behalf of, but certainly, all kidding aside, that's in great debt to our Premier and the central election team.

Within the office in Saskatoon Greystone, the constituency

office, a special thanks to Kathy, who helped us out last year, as well as Kacey, who was helping us out just recently. And Kalle's now back from maternity leave. And here within the legislature, Dawn and Tessa, Amanda and Lisa, and Greg, and of course Mary, the chief of staff, who continues to make sure that we're all on time and on track with our work.

I'm especially pleased tonight to return to the theme of keeping the Saskatchewan advantage because it's an opportunity for us to highlight some of the fundamentals that continue to ensure that we have a solid foundation for growth, fundamentals like the fact that there are now in Saskatchewan 1.067 million people and growing. And, Mr. Speaker, the significance of a growing population can be summarized most recently by Tony Blair's memoirs. And what he says quite simply, and I'll paraphrase, is this: jurisdictions either have a growing population or a shrinking population, Mr. Speaker. And in Saskatchewan after years of out-migration, Mr. Speaker, where more than 800,000 people left this province largely during the rule of the New Democratic Party, what we see is that the population has grown by more than 60,000 people in the course of the last five years.

[20:30]

In addition to the population growth, we see that Saskatchewan is now seen as a growth leader. Whether it's through the Conference Board of Canada, the Bank of Montreal, RBC [Royal Bank of Canada], or a number of other independent institutions and entities across the country, Saskatchewan has been selected to finish as one of the top economic performers in the country. And what does that mean? It means that for the month of February, the last month that we have statistics for, there were more than 520,000 people working in Saskatchewan. That's an all-time record for the month of February. We have not only a record, Mr. Speaker, as far as employment; we have a record as far as full-time employment in the province, more than 420,000 people working.

Mr. Speaker, we also have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, tied with Alberta at 5 per cent. And importantly, we not only see more people working and more people working full-time, but we also see our workforce becoming more inclusive. In fact what we've seen for the ninth consecutive month is real gains. These are real gains for First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker. What we have is a 17.4 per cent growth rate in employment, almost 6,000 jobs for First Nations and Métis people who are now at an all-time record, nearly 40,000 First Nations and Métis people working in the province of Saskatchewan, an all-time record. Mr. Speaker, the significance of this, when we think about more people working and we talk about an outcome that's logical, is the average weekly earnings continue to go up. In fact they went up 3.3 per cent year over year for December over December 2010. That's among the second highest increase, especially when we focus on payroll jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Saskatchewan continues to make progress, but in order to ensure that this progress can be sustained, we've needed to focus on some key elements and that's why I am very pleased to be supporting this budget as it is a balanced budget, one of the only balanced budgets that we'll see in North America, Mr. Speaker. That reflects and

reinforces the strength of the AAA credit rating that our Minister of Finance recently announced for the first time in our history. It also reflects the fact that this government has helped to reduce the debt by nearly 44 per cent. That's about \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker. We know that's the kind of ethos that informs the work of this government. But it's not simply about making sure that the bottom line is taken care of. It's also helping to ensure that the people of this province are taken care of.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me highlight that in this most recent budget that the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency has seen an increase of \$16.9 million. Mr. Speaker, we know how important that is to everyone across the province. We also know that we have seen an additional \$5 million for the planning and design of the Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford. And the list in health care goes on.

We also know that there are significant investments for seniors: in keeping with our platform promises, an additional \$3.5 million for the new seniors' personal care home benefit and, Mr. Speaker, an additional \$3.3 million, an increase to provide seniors' income plan, another benefit for our senior citizens.

We can talk about the progress that we've seen regarding the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities eligibility where the number of clients will expand from about 3,000 to about 10,000 adults, and these benefits are going to be increased per month. Mr. Speaker, this is important for families just as the new dollars are important to help ensure that we continue to make enhancements to those suffering from autism spectrum disorders. And, Mr. Speaker, we're also moving forward on new child care spaces and we know how important that is in the new Saskatchewan.

I'd also like to highlight that we're making real progress, especially in the construction and renovation of some of our schools. And I'd like to highlight a couple of those. Work continues at St. Matthew, right in the heart of Saskatoon Greystone, and work continues as well at Holy Cross, which is just outside of the riding in Saskatoon Eastview where a number of Greystone families have their students.

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on, but what I'd like to do is be able to highlight on behalf of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration some of the vital investments that we continue to make. Regarding post-secondary education in the province of Saskatchewan under the leadership of Premier Brad Wall, Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of our Premier, we know that there have been \$3.5 billion invested in post-secondary education — an all-time record, Mr. Speaker. For example, there has been an increase of more than 3,000 per cent in student housing, Mr. Speaker, because we know how vital this is. And that includes, Mr. Speaker, new dollars to support the planning for a student residence and child care facilities and other associated services right here at the University of Regina, and that's been contained within this budget.

We've also seen, Mr. Speaker, as part of the \$890 million budget — which is a 4.1 per cent increase for the ministry — that we have millions of new dollars for our post-secondary institutions. We have over \$107 million in support for our

students through such programs as student financial assistance and bursaries, provincial training allowance and the apprenticeship training allowance, the skills training benefit, the graduate retention program. And I'd like to highlight, Mr. Speaker, with the graduate retention program, more than 30,000 Saskatchewan graduates are benefiting from this, the most aggressive youth retention program in the country.

I'd also like to highlight, Mr. Speaker, more than \$109 million being invested for skills training and labour force development, as we know how important that skills training is today and will be in the future for people right across our province. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight the more than \$47 million that's being invested through this budget to support post-secondary education and skills training for First Nations and Métis people right here in the province. And in fact just yesterday, with the partnership of the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] and the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, we had taken a bold step to move forward in helping to address and eliminate the education and employment gaps that exist for our First Nations and Métis students right here in the province, Mr. Speaker, because we know how important it is.

Today in Saskatchewan there are more than 12,000 jobs open and available, and we anticipate that that's going to grow to between 75 and 90,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the next 5, 7, to 10 years — pick your rates of growth. Mr. Speaker, what we know though is that, importantly and increasingly, it's levels of education and skills training that will provide the opportunity for our students, no matter where they come from, no matter who they are in Saskatchewan, to access those new career opportunities. It's one of the reasons that we're moving forward with the new Saskatchewan advantage scholarship which offers \$500 a year to new Saskatchewan grade 12 graduates. And they'll have up to \$2,000, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that post-secondary education is increasingly affordable and accessible.

Mr. Speaker, we also have undertaken to ensure that a portion of student loans will be forgiven for doctors and nurses and nurse practitioners who are willing to serve in rural and remote communities across our province, helping to make sure that we're serving all of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we're also continuing to move forward in some key areas of health care and that is \$13.5 million in this budget to continue to fulfill our commitments to train 300 additional nurses in Saskatchewan and to have 100 additional physicians a year, Mr. Speaker. Those are ongoing commitments and we know how important these are to ensure that people of this province will be, continue to be so well served by our health care providers.

Regarding key areas of innovation, Mr. Speaker, the budget provides for \$17 million. New dollars for the international vaccine centre recently opened by our Premier and the Prime Minister, among others, including President Peter MacKinnon at the University of Saskatchewan. New dollars for the Canadian Light Source synchrotron, one of the foremost and largest science projects within the country, Mr. Speaker. We're also making good on our commitment to provide additional dollars to our national water chair. That was a national competition, 19 special chairs open and available for competition across the country. The University of Saskatchewan secured that, Mr. Speaker. And it's a \$30 million

commitment combined from the federal government, the provincial government, and the University of Saskatchewan, and it's helping to ensure that the University of Saskatchewan will have one of the foremost centres of excellence in water research anywhere in the world. And that's being led by Dr. Howard Wheeler. And, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other initiatives regarding science and innovation that will continue to be important. We're also putting \$1 million for the continued construction of the Southeast Regional College and we know how important that is, especially for some of my key colleagues in that busy corner of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I highlight these types of investments for some key reasons, Mr. Speaker. Because not only has this government, the government of the province of Saskatchewan, come forward with a balanced budget; not only has it focused on ensuring that we're helping to serve, through new investments, our senior citizens and our families, Mr. Speaker. We're also putting our students first, Mr. Speaker, as well as our scholars and our researchers, and we continue to focus on key areas.

But, Mr. Speaker, that stands in stark contrast to the members opposite who, when asked through their interim leader what is it that they would do differently and where is it that they would find some additional dollars, Mr. Speaker, they casually commented — casually, Mr. Speaker — that probably they would look to municipalities and to our agricultural community, Mr. Speaker.

Let's dust that off a little bit. As a government, we have moved forward in record ways with municipal revenue sharing. That's a partnership approach, Mr. Speaker. And the very first note that we hear regarding alternatives, Mr. Speaker, is that the opposition members would go on the attack to pull dollars back from cities like Saskatoon and Regina and growing communities right across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, then we'd see the NDP go back to their old track record of going after rural communities and agricultural producers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a sad commentary where they had turned and said to citizens across the province, it's to municipalities and to agricultural producers right across Saskatchewan, that's where they would go and get more dollars.

Mr. Speaker, as far as balancing the budgets of this province, this has been a key priority for our government. It's also speaking to the priorities that we put forward: priorities like fiscal probity; priorities like sustainability to make sure that as we put programs in place, we can ensure that they're sustainable for the people of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, what we hear from the members opposite is that they would begin to undermine some of the very foundations of growth that have made Saskatchewan great, not simply over the course of five years, Mr. Speaker, but over the course of more than a century.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to make sure that as people look back on this era they see that the commitments made by this government are kept because they're clearly aligned with the people of this province, but that they're also sustainable and realistic. Because when we were out on the doorstep during the recent provincial election, Mr. Speaker, we heard it very

clearly: make sure you continue to manage the dollars of this province as if they were your own, with the same care and attention that goes with the office to which you are being elected. We've taken that task very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I'm very pleased tonight to speak in support of this budget, Mr. Speaker, and certainly opposed to anything on offer from the NDP opposite.

[20:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be able to stand in this Legislative Assembly and take my place and speak to the budget that was presented last Wednesday by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora.

First of all I'd just like to comment a little bit about the constituency of Moosomin and recognize those members who have been very supportive of me, which has allowed me to serve in this Legislative Assembly for the past number of years. First of all I would like to say thank you to my wife, Lois, and our family, who have been very supportive. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think back to when I first was asked to run and the young family I had. My son was eight, my second son was six, and my daughter was two. And the two boys are now married. And just the other day, our second son provided us with our fifth grandchild, a granddaughter.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the realities are if you've got family, if you've got friends, people who appreciate you, that's the most important thing that you can hold to because in politics you'll have those who will support you one day and the next day they are not very happy with some of the choices you're forced to make. But I have been really privileged to have a family who has been always there and certainly a brother that I farm with who's carried the burden on the farm while I have carried my responsibilities as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

And a number of members have also mentioned, and the member from Regina Rosemont introduced us to a very important person in his life as well, his CA [constituency assistant]. We as members have been truly privileged through the years and I know I've had a couple of gals that have worked for me for the past, well let me say this, 20 years. And in fact one of my CAs is basically kind of hinting very strongly, she's at that point in her life where she'd like to have it a little easier and enjoy her grandkids too. But I want to thank Tina Durbin and Audrey McEwen for their work, and also Audrey has been a very strong support this past winter. She unfortunately lost her husband and so we were there to offer her support and just to say, support her in her loss but to also say, thank you for the way you have provided your support and supported us in the office.

Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected to this Legislative Assembly — and speaking about boundary redistribution — the Moosomin constituency was a very little rectangular constituency, very easy to get around. I remember my first election and going to every one of the polls and saying thank you to all the poll workers.

And then the 1991 election came along and at that time, Mr. Speaker, I worked, I had to work awfully hard. In 1986 I was elected with a pretty good majority; 1991, I had the nickname of landslide Toth. But since then a number of other members have had that opportunity of having that, being graced with that comment. But it took a lot of work and then '91 came around and by the time the '95 election was on, we had another redistribution and the boundary changed. And even to this day, some of the areas that, Mr. Speaker, you now have the privilege of representing, still call me and they comment on how much they enjoyed my representation for them. And I've never forgotten the people that were back in that original riding.

And then — what was it? — 2005 I think, was the next . . . No, 2001-02 was the next redistribution and the boundary changed again. So it'd be interesting to see what the new Boundary Commission comes up with for boundaries in the Moosomin constituency.

But when you look at, I guess I would say of all the members, I may have one of the easier ridings to represent because as you proceed east of Regina, once you start at Sintaluta, right through to the Manitoba border, that's my riding. All those communities very easy to get to, and then on 48, there's a half a dozen communities that are accessible and that's on my way home — very easy to get to. Whereas a number of other of my colleagues in rural areas, their communities are here and there and really spread around. There's no direct link. And so I can say the Moosomin constituency certainly is one that's made it very convenient to communicate with the public.

So it's been an honour to serve the Moosomin constituency for the past number of years. And over that time I've seen a number of budgets. I've seen governments make choices. And I can say with gratitude, I'm thankful that there was a government in the '80s that thought of people and their needs. There was, in the area that I represent, there was a new care home built in Whitewood. There was a new care home built in Wawota, a new care home built in Wolseley. And I don't know where we'd be today if those care homes would not have been built at that time. Even today we're facing struggles as we have more and more seniors needing heavy care. So I go back to that first period when I was elected and I say thank you to that government which I happened to have been a part of. We've seen some tough choices and some tough years, but choices that have been a benefit today.

Then I see after 1991 . . . The Leader of the Opposition was talking about some of the choices that governments make. And I think he was lamenting the choice about the film tax, or the film grant, that as a government we had to look at and say, no, we can't just continue going on giving out grants to everybody. But I remember back in '91 a government that decided that they were going to close 52 rural hospitals, plus the Plains Health Centre. And I've experienced that. And also, for the agriculture community, they . . . a government that decided, no, we're not going to support farmers. And they tore up the GRIP program — retroactively tore up that GRIP program — something that farmers were nicely becoming used to and recognized, well if I want, I can buy insurance to protect myself. And I'm grateful to see over the years that we have actually moved back and we are working towards farm security programs.

So what we saw just a week ago, Mr. Speaker, a minister who struggled, along with this government, to put forward a budget that recognized the needs of the people of Saskatchewan, looked at the commitments and the promises made by the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party — Premier of the province of Saskatchewan — in the last election, and said, how do we balance it? How do we move forward to maintain the Saskatchewan advantage? And what the Premier and this government, under the leadership of the Minister of Finance, came up with was a budget that will keep our budgets balanced, will keep our spending sustainable, will keep our economy strong and growing and is keeping the promises made in the last election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked a lot about balanced budgets. And I always find it interesting to hear, whether it's the Finance minister or the Finance critic respond to budgets when they are presented. And somehow or other the critics always seem to find a negative. I don't know how that happens, but I appreciate the fact that those individuals who have been critics of Finance, Finance critics on the opposition side regardless of what party, we always tend to find a few things to criticize. But I think it must be very difficult right now for the current Finance critic to find a lot to criticize because there are so many positives in this budget — balanced and sustainable, Mr. Speaker. There's just so much to be positive about in this budget.

In fact, I would talk about, we're going to talk about for a moment about the first-time homeowners' tax credit. I remember in 1982, while I wasn't elected at the time, I remember a government of the time was elected when interest rates, people were facing interest rates of 19 and 21 per cent, losing their homes, and a government came in and said, we're going to subsidize that. Anything above 13.5 per cent we're going to subsidize. There's people still saying to me, I'm grateful for Grant Devine and that government because I'd have lost; we were on the verge of losing our home. And they had their homes.

And I am sure that first-time homebuyers using the tax credit that was promised in the last election are going to be saying thank you to this Premier, this Finance minister, and this government as they move forward and buy their first home.

I believe as well many families will really appreciate the fact that this government has expanded the PST exemption on children's clothing to age 17 and under. And we've heard, all of us as elected members understand the challenges of raising a family nowadays. So to be able to clothe your children and have that exemption up to 17, I'm certain will be appreciated.

It's also what I've seen, Mr. Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, what I've noticed is there is a lot of young families nowadays are getting their children involved in many activities. They don't want to see their children just sitting in front of the TV with a video game on. They want to see their children active. And this province has recognized that — this provincial government — and have said, you know, we think that's good. We want to see active families. And so this provincial budget has come forward with an active families tax benefit for those as well 17 and under.

And as many of my colleagues have commented, we're also

putting money in to fund 500 more child care spaces. Let me say a bit about child care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With this growing province, one thing I have noticed in the Moosomin constituency is there is a need for child care. It doesn't matter which community I go to, people, young couples are looking for people who will be able to provide child care. And while there's been some publicly funded child care spaces in the constituency, there just aren't enough to meet the needs and . . . because of the fact that there's demands all across the province. And so we've got some private child care, and people are stepping up to the plate and providing child care. So while the province is making a commitment to new publicly funded ones, I want to say thank you to the many private daycare operators out there for providing care for these young families.

And then the Minister of Advanced Education just spoke about a \$2,000 scholarship, Saskatchewan advantage scholarship which will be available to young men and women leaving high school as they move forward in their post-secondary education, and the fact that there's a government there wanting to stand with them. We're not paying the total shot, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't think we should. But if we can help in any small way, I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people are going to be saying thank you to this government for a balanced budget and a budget that gives thought to the needs of individuals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no doubt over the past four and a half years this provincial government, our government, has worked hard to expand and to support the agricultural community. And one of the things, I want to acknowledge and say thank you to the Minister of Agriculture, who has indicated that he wants to step back from that position and enjoy his grandchildren, for the work he's done over the past four and a half years. As a result of his work, we have seen many improvements to a number of the agricultural programs in this province, such as crop insurance which now includes record coverage and more options than ever before. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, almost three-quarters of this year's budget will go toward fully funding business risk management programs such as AgriStability, AgriInvest, and crop insurance, which has a record budget of 177 million.

Let me speak about one of the changes to crop insurance this year. Last year the Minister of Agriculture, along with his federal counterpart, increased the flooded acreage coverage from 50 to \$70. This year farmers will have the option to choose an additional either 15 or \$30 an acre, bringing it up to \$100 an acre for flooded acres that are unseedable due to flooding.

[21:00]

Mr. Speaker, I need to also remind producers, who may happen to be paying attention tonight, that the Minister of Agriculture said last year, no more AgriRecovery. And this year we have determined that there is no more AgriRecovery. In fact I'm sure that, certain that the federal Finance minister will be pointing out in his budget coming up, I believe on Thursday, no more AgriRecovery. So farmers need to be aware of the fact that there are some significant options out there for you, and before you get to the end of this week, March 31st, take a look, a serious look at crop insurance and what has been done by this government over the last four and a half years to assist you in

providing the necessary securities such as crop insurance and AgriStability and AgriInvest. And take the time to look over the program and determine — it's your choice — do you want to ensure that if you have a crop failure that someone's there to help you? The province will be there if you work together with the province. So I just want to mention that.

Mr. Speaker, as well, we've also seen how the government has stepped forward to help rural municipalities. I shouldn't say rural — municipal governments. The fact that four years ago the Saskatchewan Party campaigned on a promise to share one point of the 5 per cent PST with municipal governments. And what have we seen as a result of that? I believe, having been a councillor in an RM [rural municipality] a number of years ago, what that has done has created a lot more security for municipal governments. They now know from one year to the next roughly what kind of money they can expect to receive from the provincial government through this agreement, and as a result, have a better way of managing their own fiscal responsibilities and budgets.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the growing economy, this year municipal governments are going to see, I believe, it's roughly around \$37 million more than they did last year. Not something new, because they already had an idea of what was coming. But with the fact that they are guaranteed 20 per cent of the PST, they know exactly what they will be, or close to what they will be, able to work with, which makes it much easier for them to plan their own budgets and try to address the fiscal responsibilities that they have to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the constituency of Moosomin, health care is a very important factor, and one of the major concerns certainly not only in this province but especially in rural Saskatchewan is the need for medical professionals, for doctors. And this budget provides more money to — \$1.5 million exactly — to implement a rural physician locum pool to improve access to physician care. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a number of excellent doctors working in rural Saskatchewan. Unfortunately in some cases it's a one-man practice. And you can appreciate the fact that one man or one individual practice, either a gentleman or a gal, who is practising and to be working every day, seven days a week, is not very easy. So this locum pool, I trust, will help alleviate some of the problems and give some of the single-practice physicians an opportunity to have a break so that they can keep themselves refreshed.

But I need to make one comment about what is happening in the Moosomin constituency. In the community of Moosomin, we had a number of doctors who saw some of the challenges just by being individual physicians, and what they did was form a team concept. They have what they call the Moosomin Family Practice. Currently I believe there's seven doctors working in that. They all work together. They all share the load. And what it has done is that it has created a better environment for them to enjoy and raise a family and also have time off because they know that there's somebody they can count on to be responsible for the 24-hour care at the hospital or the emergency care, Mr. Speaker. And I believe they have set an example that could be looked upon and could be built upon around the province as we look to try and recruit more rural physicians for rural Saskatchewan.

We've also put more money into the nurse assistant, practitioner care, and looking to expand that program because we have some of that working on our part of the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that people appreciate it. And I know in many cases, from a lot of people, if it wasn't for the nurse practitioners, they really wouldn't have access to health care and medical care delivery services. So to the nurse practitioners who are out there, we say thank you. And we say thank you to the nurses and the LPNs [licensed practical nurse] who enjoy working and living in rural Saskatchewan.

One of the other areas that we've talked about and a number of my colleagues have talked about as well is the money going into the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. Mr. Deputy Speaker, unless you've been there . . . And I'm not sure there's anyone sitting in this building who has not been impacted or affected at some point or other by someone having to deal with cancer. And it's a disease that really creates a burden on individuals and families, and it's a horrendous disease. And so how important it is for us to expand the research in that area. How important for us to expand screening like the colorectal cancer screening program that was announced, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know I am just hitting on some of the small things or just a number of the . . . a few of the initiatives that have been brought forward in the area of health. But I think those are very important. And I know that people across this province really appreciate a government that looks at the needs of individuals and doesn't just speak about them but actually takes the action to try and address those problems. So that's what we saw when the budget was brought down by the Minister of Finance a week ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We do look at rural Saskatchewan, and there are a number of MLAs seated in this Legislative Assembly, who also know in rural Saskatchewan highways is very important. And there are concerns through the years. And I have had the privilege of raising a number of my highways. And unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the highways that I spoke about for years and years, when the boundary redistribution came in place, they put that highway into Cannington Manor. And, unfortunately, when the minister announced it was under construction, by the time construction moved forward and was completed, my colleague, the member from Cannington, was able to brag about the completion of Highway 48, even though I probably had done more to see that it was actually brought forward and construction was completed on.

But let me say this. There was one little section, one little section of Highway 48 from White City to the Manitoba border still left under construction. And I remember a gentleman that I became a good friend with, a shoemaker in the town of Kennedy. And he said, I would love to live to see that highway completed. Unfortunately he didn't, but thanks to former minister of Highways and the current Minister of Highways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've moved some dirt last year.

I have to add this story because it was quite interesting. A gentleman came up to me shortly after the election, and he said, now wasn't that neat? And I said, what do you mean? He said, well you know, just as the Premier called the election, this contractor moves in and starts to move dirt. Four days after the election, they pulled out, and we're stuck with this highway full

of holes. So I came to the minister and I said, at least fill the holes so that they can travel on them in the wintertime. And the department did a pretty good job of making the highway passable.

I trust that by the end of this highway construction season, we will see that highway complete. And from White City right through to the Manitoba border, we will have a road that will see, I believe, once it's completed, we're going to see added traffic along that road because it is the shortest route from Virden, Manitoba, right through to Regina. Not just that, but it's also a major route to one of our highly travelled tourism destinations, the Kenosee park. So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of people looking forward to seeing that highway completed, and so am I.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could talk about a lot of other highways, but I'll let my colleagues just fill in on all the debate regarding their highways.

I realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . I'm not trying to speak out the clock, but there's so many things to talk about. There's certainly so many things to talk about. And a couple of areas that when I was first elected that I really took an interest in was, and I really felt through the years we need to, we need to ensure that we are looking after those who are less fortunate in amongst us, seniors with and people with disabilities.

And I'm pleased to see that as a result of this budget, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan assured income for disability or the SAID program is going to see more funding made available so that people with disabilities can live with their heads held high. The program was designed to address two public policy goals: to assure a socially acceptable income for people with disabilities, recognizing the range of additional costs associated with disability; and to encourage and empower persons with disabilities to participate as fully as possible in community life according to their capacity and aspirations.

And I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you're probably aware of and many of my colleagues, that there are many people across this province today are grateful that there's a government that recognizes that people with disabilities are just as important as each and every one of us who are blessed to have sound natural health. And they're certainly grateful for what has been done. Could more have been done, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Always more can be done, but the fact that we've moved forward and worked to address some of those needs is certainly appreciated.

The Saskatchewan seniors' income plan is another area, and a number of my colleagues have spoken to that, so I'm not going to expand on that a lot any more than the fact that it's been addressed on a number of occasions. But that's another program that people are really appreciative of.

And another one that I was certainly pleased to hear, and I know a lot of my constituents were pleased to hear, that we are also stepping forward to help people who . . . seniors living in personal care homes. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we lack the beds to meet all the needs in the publicly funded care homes, and as a result, a lot of personal care homes have had to step up. And those homes cost a fair bit

of money. The fact that this government has now said, if you're in a personal care home, we're going to step up and we're going to help with some of your financial costs. And I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will certainly be welcomed. And I know many of my constituents were pleased to see that as well.

We've seen my colleagues have talked about funding for expanded affordable housing. And as was explained earlier by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Social Services even today spoke about an area where, as government, we're moving forward to address the needs of individuals. Affordable housing is a major concern in our province. Why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because with our growing province, growing population, there isn't a community in my constituency . . . We take a look at the city of Regina or Saskatoon. We can see how they're expanding. People need places to live. Unfortunately not everyone can build the 2 or the 3 or the \$500,000 home. Affordable housing is important. And while the money today may not meet all those needs, it certainly will go a long way. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of people will be grateful for that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to wind up my comments by speaking about funding for education. Education, Saskatchewan School Boards Association was pleased to see that, and they've said education is recognized as a foundation to our province's growth.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the past few years we've had a lot of debate about coming up with the new funding formula. And unfortunately when you look at trying to build formulas, sometimes when you come up, change the formula, and you try to make it fair and treat everyone equally, people get left out. And when the Minister of Education was able to finally announce we'll, over a number of years . . . And I know last year the debate was, why is that formula not available to us yet? And there were a number of things that needed to be done to try and ensure that it treated boards of education fairly.

And this year, when the minister finally announced that we've now come up with the new funding formula, unfortunately there were roughly four, half a dozen rural school divisions that were going to be facing some significant challenges because of the new formula. And after a lot of discussion and discussion with one of the boards of education that comprises the Moosomin . . . constituency of Moosomin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to see that the Minister of Education recognized that there was some great inequities in this formula and that we needed to find a way to balance how the formula was implemented so that school divisions wouldn't find themselves at a major loss.

And the Prairie Valley School Division was looking at a roughly . . . almost an 11 per cent decrease in funding which would have been a catastrophe for them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And what did this government come up with? The minister, under the leadership of the Minister of Education, Minister of Finance, this government came up with some interim funding to help in that transition period, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I know that moving in that area was certainly something that was recognized. And the Prairie Valley School Division and other school divisions were certainly pleased to see that the government recognized the challenges they were facing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know there's so much more that I could speak about, but a number of my colleagues would also like to enter debate, and I believe there's a couple or two or three opposition members still want to speak to the budget before us. But I can say this: I'm pleased to stand here today and recognize and speak about a budget that's forward-looking, a budget that didn't go way out on a limb and spend beyond our means, a budget that is balanced on the general revenue side. It's balanced on the summary financial statements, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[21:15]

And a budget that also is putting aside money for a rainy day, because we saw what happened last year with the flooding that took place across a good part of the province. If the provincial government hadn't stepped up to the plate with PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] with some significant dollars, if we wouldn't have had the rainy day fund, that would have been very difficult. So having a rainy day fund with \$700-and-some million — \$766 I believe million — in it gives the government a little bit of a flexibility and a buffer.

And I know, anyone in the personal finances also recognizes that it's not just good to run with a financial statement that's balanced every day. It's also good to have a little bit of a buffer because sometimes . . . Well as a wage earner and as one of my children was saying the other day when the struts and the springs went on his vehicle and \$1,000 expense repair hits you, it's good to have a little additional money sitting on the side because we know what it is to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Especially Highway 48.

Mr. Toth: — That's correct, member across the floor, especially on Highway 48. However, the minister's been looking after that. I'll let the member know that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've had all kinds of accolades from the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, Canadian home builders, and the vice-presidents of both, of cities . . . [inaudible] . . . the Canadian taxpayers. And every one of them have spoken about how pleased they were to see the government come forward with a budget that was forward-looking, that was balanced, that will allow the province of Saskatchewan to maintain its advantage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to stand here in support of the budget presented by the member of Canora, the Minister of Finance. And I stand opposed to the amendment that was brought forward by the member from Rosetown, or Rosemont. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Doke: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to enter into this budget debate. And at the onset, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this balanced budget and will be voting in favour of its adoption.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Finance minister has tabled one of the

few balanced budgets in North America that will make life more affordable while ensuring spending remains sustainable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget focuses on fulfilling promises made in the recent election campaign while keeping the Saskatchewan advantage through sound physical management, to ensure our economy remains strong. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2012-13 budget makes important investment in Saskatchewan infrastructure by boosting capital spending on schools, hospitals, highways, and other infrastructure projects by 193 million, or 32 per cent, to \$788 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget will also provide record revenue sharing of \$237.4 million in 2012-13 to ensure our cities, towns, villages, and RMs can meet the demands of a growing province. That's a 9.5 per cent increase from the previous year and an 87 per cent increase over the 2007-08 budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's population jumped to an all-time high of 1,067,612 according to new data from Statistics Canada. That represents growth of 17,064 people in 2011, the largest increase in one year since 1953. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Premier said, this speaks to the strength of our economy and illustrates a clear shift in the economic fortunes of our country to Western Canada and to Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is now a have province with a vibrant economy and growing population. That's a big change from just a few short years ago. Saskatchewan's 2011 growth rate of 1.62 per cent was the second highest in Canada, behind only Alberta.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2012-13 budget is about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage — balanced budgets, a growing economy, and government services that are affordable and sustainable in the long run. Mr. Deputy Speaker, around the world we are seeing the chaos caused by governments that did not live within their means. Here in Canada, other provinces like Ontario face severe choices in the years ahead. Saskatchewan's economy and our finances are in a much better shape. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan advantage, this budget, is keeping the Saskatchewan advantage by keeping our budget balanced, keeping our spending sustainable, keeping our economy strong and growing, and keeping the promises we made in the election campaign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, overall we will be held to a 4.7 per cent increase this year; 3.9 per cent of that increase is operating spending, and the remainder is capital investments. Overall spending will be \$11.2 billion, virtually identical to the spending level we promised in the election campaign. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this allows us to meet our priorities and keep our election promises. It also means responsible spending choices. Saskatchewan is the first province to table a balanced budget this year. It is balanced in the General Revenue Fund. It is balanced in the summary financial statements. And the Growth and Financial Security Fund will maintain a balance of \$756 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy remains strong. In 2011, the Saskatchewan economy grew by 3.6 per cent, second highest in Canada, even with the challenges caused by the excess moisture and flooding. The private forecasters expect us to lead the nation with 3.1 per cent growth this year and to

lead again with 3.3 per cent growth in 2013. Our non-renewable resource revenue from potash and oil are both expected to be up in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, in the last campaign we made some targeted election promises designed to make life more affordable for Saskatchewan people. Increased revenues will allow us to keep our election promises with a balanced budget. In total they amount to about \$83 million this year, less than 1 per cent of overall spending. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to now highlight some of these promises.

For those buying their first home, we are keeping our promise for the new Saskatchewan first-time homebuyers tax credit up to \$1,100 against Saskatchewan income tax payable.

For families, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have extended the PST exemption on children's clothing to under age 17 and under. We have expanded the active families tax benefit to those 17 and under. We are also keeping our promise to provide funding for 500 new child care spaces.

For students, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are keeping our promise to add \$4.6 million to meet the 2011 platform commitment of establishing the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship program that provides any high school graduate from 2012 onwards with up to \$2,000 over four years to be applied towards tuition fees at any Saskatchewan post-secondary institution.

For persons with disabilities, we are keeping our promise to add \$113 million, a net \$17.8 million increase to provide expanded Saskatchewan assured income for disability eligibility. The number of clients will expand from 3,000 to 10,000 adults. And benefits increase by \$200 per month, couples up to \$230 per month, in the July 2012, and by \$350 per month, couples up to \$400 per month, in the fourth year. Our goal is to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for low-income seniors we are keeping the platform commitment of \$3.5 million for the new seniors' personal care home benefit estimated to be \$278 per month, rising to \$369 per month by the fourth year. We have committed \$24.2 million, a \$3.3 million increase to provide seniors' income plan benefit increases up to \$50 per month starting July 2012, with increases up to \$10 per month in the next three years. In our first term, we doubled this benefit for low-income seniors, and by the end of this term, we will have tripled it from what it was when we took office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're improving access to health care. Regional health authority funding increases \$98.2 million, a 3.5 per cent increase; \$60.5 million for Saskatchewan surgical initiatives to add 8,000 more surgeries, additional physician services, home care, and rehabilitation services; \$2.5 million increase to reduce costs for those with diabetes by adding two forms of long-acting insulin to the drug plan and expand the children's insulin pump program from age 17 to age 25 years old; \$4 million to expand colorectal screening programs province-wide, providing early detection and prevention of later treatment — Prairie North Health District will be providing this service in my constituency of Cut Knife-Turtleford.

\$5.5 million increase for the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, STARS helicopter ambulance service; 16.9 million increase in Saskatchewan Cancer Agency for drug, medical, and operating costs, funding new patient referral, chemotherapy treatments, and mammograms; \$42.7 million to begin construction of seven previously announced long-term care facilities in a new shared ownership model which will continue to use the 80 per cent local cost share; \$5 million for planning the redesign of the Saskatchewan Hospital, North Battleford, which is in the constituency of Cut Knife-Turtleford but has a great interest to my friend here next to me.

Mr. Speaker, in the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education, this budget also introduces new education funding and increases K to 12 funding to help with the transition to the new formula. As a result of the new funding formula and the education funding increase, all schools divisions will see a funding increase ranging anywhere from 1.7 to 14.4 per cent. This affects the Living Sky School Division and the Light of Christ School Division in the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency. \$1.74 billion in total school operating funding, a 5 per cent increase; \$38.6 million to begin construction of six new school projects in a new shared ownership model; \$50.1 million in third party grants for 15 major school capital projects which are already under construction or are major renovations; \$4 million in planning for three school projects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, post-secondary education and labour force development, our government has invested a record amount into post-secondary education and skills training since 2007 with a significant support for First Nations and Métis students. New initiatives include: the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship; forgiving student loans for new doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners that serve in underserved rural and remote communities for five years; a matching grant for parents making the RESP [registered education savings plan] contributions; \$36.5 million for the Student Aid Fund, an increase of \$6.7 million; \$12 million increase to support operating costs of post-secondary institutions; \$10.3 million to continue to meet government's commitment of expanding the registered nurse training program by 170 seats. The growth and development of Saskatchewan's labour force is a priority for our government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on highways, our provincial government continues to repair and improve our highway system to support our thriving economy and growing population. We will see an estimated 1,200 kilometres improved this year. We promised during the recent campaign to invest \$2.2 billion over four years, and we're on track to fulfill that promise with a total highways budget of \$581.5 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan continues to work with First Nations and Métis in this 2012-13 budget. The 2012-13 budget continues to support First Nations and Métis by providing \$172.4 million for important initiatives across government, an increase of more than \$4.7 million or 2.8 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the budget highlights for this category are an increase of \$2.5 million — \$67.6 million total — for grants that support First Nation and Métis community economic and social programs under provincial gaming agreements.

The Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations also provides continued funding for treaty land entitlements and the First Nations and Métis Consultation Participation Fund; education funding of \$9.4 million which will include an increase of 38.5 per cent to pre-kindergarten programs; capital targeted to high-need areas, summer literacy camps, continued support for First Nations and Métis education initiatives funds, the high school completion initiatives fund, and the Aboriginal individual achievement grants. More than \$1.5 million for First Nation forestry agreements; continued support for year two of the northern action plan to improve the well-being of at-risk individuals in northern Saskatchewan. An increase of \$324,000 for initiatives in the Ministry of Social Services, including First Nations group homes, First Nations case management payments programs, the Family Finders program, Saskatchewan's First Nations Family and Community Institute, and First Nations response model group home. Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport's support in 2012-13 of \$1 million for the North American Indigenous Games as well as support for Wanuskewin Heritage Park and urban Aboriginal community grants; continued support for First Nations and Métis engagement related to child and youth agenda.

[21:30]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in regards to agriculture, Saskatchewan farm and ranch families are the backbone of our province. The \$430.8 million budget this year is the second largest budget ever announced — \$321.4 million to fund crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest. This is a record \$177 million for crop insurance. Mr. Speaker, this government has a continued commitment to agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to see that the community rink affordable grant will provide an annual \$2,500 grant to assist communities to pay for the cost of operating indoor ice surfaces. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan, ice rinks are a social meeting place, and in the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency, there are some 15 indoor ice surfaces. This grant is the difference needed to keep these rinks open.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in closing I would like to thank all the ministries for allowing MLA input into the budget. As a new member, it truly makes you feel you are a united team. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I proudly reiterate my support for this budget, and I will be supporting its passage. And I will most certainly be against the motion put forth by the member opposite. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the budget. And before I begin my formal remarks, I'd like to just extend my appreciation to a number of people.

First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the constituents of Saskatoon Northwest, my thanks for the opportunity to again represent them in this legislature. It's an honour that very few people get, and so it's my pleasure to be here again for another term.

I'd also like to thank my executive for all the hard work that they have done for me leading up not only to the election but throughout the year. We recently had a successful fundraiser in Saskatoon Northwest and that success is their credit.

I'd also like to thank Ted Merriman who, as most of you know, is the former MLA from Saskatoon Northwest who ably represented those constituents during his term here, for again chairing my campaign. Ted was actually the gentleman that got me involved in politics. I need to thank him for that, and I especially want to thank him for his guidance and his friendship over these many years.

My thanks to my CA Kelly Merriman for all her hard work in running the office. It's a thankless task sometimes, but she does a wonderful job. She's very empathetic and keeps the office running quite well when I'm not there, and when I'm there as well.

I'd also like to special thanks to my family, especially my wife, Christine. As everyone in the House knows, without the support and the love of your family, it's very, very difficult to do this job. Chris has stood by me throughout my political career, since I started on the school board in Saskatoon in 2000, the year 2000. So I have to thank her very, very much for her support and her love.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place today and provide my comments with respect to the provincial budget, which was presented by the Minister of Finance last Wednesday. This budget, Mr. Speaker, is about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage and moving Saskatchewan forward. In the minister's own words: "Over the past few years, Saskatchewan people have helped to create the "Saskatchewan Advantage," a combination of balanced budgets, reduced debt and lower taxes . . ." which has led to a growing and strong economy and the tremendous quality of life that we all enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a tremendous place to live. Since forming government in 2007, we have seen a tremendous expansion in our economy. We have seen expats move to Saskatchewan, and we have seen new immigration in numbers which would have been inconceivable to governments of the past. People are coming here from all over Canada and from all over the world. They are coming here because Saskatchewan is a place of opportunity for them and their families.

Mr. Speaker, my family moved to Canada, immigrated here in the early 1950s. They did so because my parents wanted a better life for their family, and we're seeing that in the immigrants of today. We hear the same comments today from people that are moving here. Our economy is robust, and we have industries that need people to fuel that growth. Industrial growth fuels our economy and by extension expands our tax base, which in turn provides the government with resources to enhance the services which Saskatchewan people have come to expect. That, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan advantage.

This budget is balanced, and we're very proud of that. It keeps the economy growing by maintaining lower debt, by investing in key capital and programming areas, and sustaining and enhancing core government services. Mr. Speaker, while other jurisdictions are posting deficits, Saskatchewan will once again

balance its budget.

We all know how important it is to live within our means, and this budget sets an example for everyone in Saskatchewan and indeed, Mr. Speaker, sets an example for other provinces. Instead of mortgaging our future with deficit budgets, this government is paying down debt so that we can better secure the future for the children of this province who will one day take up the mantle of leadership. The example that we are now setting today will serve not only as a testament to this government's commitment to the future but will serve as an example to future leaders that responsible budgeting is the only way to secure our future successes.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the direction which our government received from the people last October. There was at that time a stark choice, one of fiscal probity and responsibility on the one hand, and on the other, wild spending promises, promises that totalled billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. And that wasn't the end of it, Mr. Speaker. Some of the promises made by our friends opposite could not be costed. The people of Saskatchewan chose a path of responsible financial planning, and that is what this budget does, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, access to health care is one of the most important issues for the people of Saskatchewan. In this budget, we've continued to address this issue by increasing funding to regional health authorities by \$98 million, representing a three and a half per cent increase. We have enhanced funding for the Saskatchewan surgical initiative by \$60.5 million to add 8,000 more surgeries, additional physician services, and home care and rehabilitation services.

Mr. Speaker, we have added two and a half million dollars to reduce the cost for those with diabetes by adding two forms of long-acting insulin and expanding the children's insulin pump program from ages 17 to 25 years. Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, I had the opportunity to meet an elderly couple in my constituency. Adding the two forms of insulin to the drug plan will answer their concerns and the concerns of many other diabetics in Saskatchewan. It will improve their quality of life, and that, Mr. Speaker, is part of the Saskatchewan advantage.

We'll add \$4 million to expand the colorectal screening program province wide, providing early detection and prevention of later treatment. Mr. Speaker, the more we can do to screen for this disease and others, the earlier we can treat people, which will have a dramatic effect on the future health costs and our future budgets.

We're adding five and a half million dollars for the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society helicopter ambulance service, and we are adding \$16.9 million in funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency for drug, medical, and operating costs for funding new patient referrals, for chemotherapy treatments, and mammograms.

There is \$42.7 million to begin the construction of seven announced long-term care facilities in the new shared ownership model which will continue to use the 80/20 cost sharing model.

There are additional third party grants to continue with six long-term care facilities currently under way in Radville, Redvers, Rosetown, Shellbrook, Tisdale, and Watrous, and \$5 million to the planning and redesign of the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. The planning and design will continue in 2012 to replace the Moose Jaw Union Hospital, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier of the quality of life, and this budget is rife with examples. Improving quality of life is part of the Saskatchewan advantage. While other provinces are cutting services in order to deal with their budgetary issues, this government is working to improve that quality of life. There is three and a half million dollars for seniors' personal care home benefit, estimated to be \$278 per month, rising to \$369 per month by the fourth year. There is a \$3.3 million increase to provide seniors' income plan benefit increases for up to \$50 a month, starting in July, with increases of \$10 per month in each of the next three years. There is more money for the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities program and for the Saskatchewan children and youth agenda, including \$1 million for enhancements for autism spectrum disorder therapies, \$600,000 for the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and \$450,000 for community mobilization project pioneered in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker.

And there's a 5 per cent increase in total school operating funding and \$38.6 million to begin the construction of six new overdue school projects. And, Mr. Speaker, there's \$237.4 million in municipal revenue sharing, which is an increase of \$20.6 million over last year's funding. This increase in funding is critical so municipalities can continue to address their needs in their communities. Mr. Speaker, municipalities know best with regard to their needs and this increase in funding will help them meet those needs. The funding to municipalities since 2007 has increased by 87 per cent. That is part of the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker. While the other provinces are cutting municipal support, this government will continue to support municipalities to meet their challenges.

Mr. Speaker, one point of the PST ensures stable and predictable funding for municipalities. No longer do municipalities have to go to the provincial government with cap in hand. Mr. Speaker, I can speak from experience. When I was on Saskatoon City Council, every year it seemed we were before the provincial government with our cap in hand asking for more money so that we could alleviate the mill rate to the residents of Saskatoon. So this stable and predictable funding is welcome and municipalities enjoy that stability.

Mr. Speaker, this budget makes life more affordable for people in Saskatchewan. In keeping with our campaign platform, there will be \$4.6 million to establish the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship program. There is a rental housing construction initiative that provides a 10-year rebate of corporate income tax equal to 10 per cent of the expected rental income per new multi-unit residential rental programs or projects. We know that affordable housing is a significant issue. It's an issue which is driven by the growth in our economy. That growth in turn allows us as a government to address the issues which arise from that growth. Working with industry to ensure affordable housing is available is key to that strategy. This is the new Saskatchewan first-time homebuyer's credit. And a program to

forgive up to \$120,000 in student loans for new doctors and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses that practise and qualify in rural and remote communities for five years.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to rural Saskatchewan is clear from this budget. We will continue to be fiscally responsible on both sides of the ledger. We will continue to move Saskatchewan forward. Mr. Speaker, in the provincial campaign there was a clear choice, and that choice was whether to move Saskatchewan forward or move Saskatchewan backwards.

One would have thought that the members opposite would have heeded the results last November, and yet as late as last Wednesday, members opposite would have stripped money from agriculture. They would have stripped money from municipalities. Mr. Speaker, our commitment to agriculture and the municipalities in this province is unwavering, as is our commitment to the rest of the economy and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to the people of this province, as demonstrated by this budget, is self-evident. We will not blink nor will we ignore our responsibilities to ensure that this province keeps moving forward. Mr. Speaker, that is the Saskatchewan advantage, and it is our pledge and solemn promise to the people of this province to maintain that advantage. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget and voting against the amendment. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I would like to start by thanking my friends, my family, and especially my wife, Danielle. I would not be here today if my wife wasn't by my side.

As you know, I along with 15 other Sask Party MLAs were elected for the first time in November. We are so thankful for our spouses and families. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the sacrifices they make, allowing us to serve in public office. All MLA families make that commitment, and without their support we could not continue in our roles.

Mr. Speaker, I have two of the best CAs in all of Saskatchewan: Conni Larson and Helen Harvey. These two ladies are the most organized and professional people I have ever worked with. They tell me countless stories of supportive Eastview residents who come into the office, people that are proud of the new Saskatchewan that we are building, keeping Saskatchewan strong, keeping the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank our Finance minister, his staff, and everyone that put in the long hours that they worked that you saw in the commitment in tabling such a balanced, sustainable budget that will keep our economy growing.

Mr. Speaker, we witnessed governments in Saskatchewan, in Canada, and across the world. We have seen what happened when governments don't live within their means. This year, Mr. Speaker, there were difficult decisions to be made, but I'm proud of this budget. Mr. Speaker, this government will live

within our means and keep our election promises.

[21:45]

During its first term, this government showed that it does what it says it will do — fulfilling its election promises. Judging by the election results on November 7th, the people of this great province had the confidence to again elect us to continue to build the new Saskatchewan. In the old Saskatchewan we saw growing debt and deficits. In the old Saskatchewan we had the longest surgical wait times in Canada. In the old Saskatchewan we had a declining population and a shrinking tax base.

Mr. Speaker, this government has listened to the voters and we will continue to invest in their priorities. We have record investment in health care, education, infrastructure, seniors, and people with disabilities. There's new money for affordable housing, children, and youth. Mr. Speaker, there is record money for towns, cities, and rural Saskatchewan. This was all done on a budget that is balanced and forward thinking.

Keeping the Saskatchewan advantage is important to everyone in our province. Here in Saskatchewan we are in much better shape because we are keeping our budget balanced, keeping our spending sustainable, keeping our economy strong and growing, keeping the promises we made in election campaigns. To get an understanding of how good a budget it is, let's hear from the public on education:

STF welcomes the priorities placed on education in the provincial budget. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation welcomes the provincial government's pledge that pre-K to 12 education is a priority in this year's provincial budget.

That was the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

On keeping our taxes low and the budget balanced, we've got another quote here: "Saskatchewan taxpayers will benefit from one of the best budgets in Canada this year."

An Hon. Member: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tochor: — Hear, hear. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It's almost worth repeating: Saskatchewan taxpayers will benefit from one of the best budgets in Canada . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And the only one balanced, that's correct. And that's from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

And on health care:

The safety of our patients and their families is of paramount importance to the registered nurses in Saskatchewan. SUN supports the government's attention to this issue.

That's the president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses.

And on employment and training:

The provincial government has demonstrated a commitment to increasing our skilled workforce through incentives which encourage youth to participate in

education and training and remain in Saskatchewan, such as the graduate retention program or the recently implemented tuition tax credits.

And that's from Alan Thomarat, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just about improving the safety of our patients. This budget will continue the important work of reducing wait times. By the end of 2013, no one will be waiting over six months for surgery, and by 2014 our goal is to have no one wait longer than three months. That's the Saskatchewan advantage. That's a health care system that everyone can be proud of.

This past weekend I had the opportunity to talk with a family in my riding of Saskatoon Eastview. They're a working family. There's the family of four. There's Ron, Donna, and their two children. We talked about the budget and what it meant to their family. First area we talked about was at how much they would be saving in income taxes. This family is saving over \$2,500 every year compared to what they were paying in 2007. Ron and Donna appreciate the extra money the family had to spend because, as we all know, raising a family can get expensive.

Mr. Speaker, another important campaign promise that we kept is increasing the PST exemption on children's clothing aged up to 17. Ron and Donna appreciate the extra help and having a little bit of a break on the PST clothing for their two children. Another campaign promise kept was the introduction of the active family tax benefit. And Ron and Donna see the importance of these programs.

As with many people in Saskatchewan, health care is a top priority. The people of Eastview are proud of what this government is investing in health care in record levels. Mr. Speaker, not that long ago, Saskatchewan had the longest wait times in the country. Because of the investments in this budget and previous Saskatchewan Party budgets, wait times are getting better. We're committed to over \$60 million for the Saskatchewan surgical initiative — a \$50 million increase — to help keep us on track towards the goal of reducing surgical wait times. With this new investment this year, we'll see over 8,000 more surgeries completed.

Donna has a mother in the city and she's a senior citizen. And one of the things that we've introduced in this budget that will help her out is the seniors' income plan. And what you're seeing is an increase in this plan, that this will help ensure that the seniors in all income levels are helped. Low-income seniors also have the new personal care home benefit to help with costs of accommodations.

In our first term in government, we doubled the seniors' income plan, and we'll triple it by the end of this term. Mr. Speaker, to get real understanding of the improvements in this program, one needs to look at the per-month seniors' income plan benefit before the Saskatchewan Party took over.

History is sometimes a harsh critic, Mr. Speaker, but the facts are the facts. The former NDP government never increased the plan for 16 years. It's an embarrassment, but . . . In 2007 the seniors' income plan benefit was a ridiculously low \$90 a

month. Today under the budget, under this budget, the benefit pays out \$240 a month, an increase of \$1,800 a year. Mr. Speaker, we know that there is more work to be done to help seniors, but we finally have a government that makes it a priority.

The last area that our family, Ron and Donna, brought up when I was talking to them this past weekend was the investment that the Saskatchewan government is making to our highways. If you remember, in the last provincial election we campaigned on investing \$2.2 billion in highways over the next four years. With this budget we are on track to fulfill the promise. We'll see an additional 1200 kilometres of improved road this year.

But don't take my word on how important highway investment is. I would like to share another quote.

During the last five years this government has used highways and infrastructure as a road to economic prosperity. Today's budget expenditure of 581 million clearly indicates the Wall's government's steadfast commitment to building, improving, and maintaining Saskatchewan's roadways. This vision will benefit generations to come.

And that's Al. Rosseker, the Saskatchewan Trucking Association.

Ron and Donna's children are not entering university just yet, but many students in Eastview will benefit with the new Saskatchewan advantage scholarship. This scholarship will provide up to \$2,000 to help cover the cost of tuition in any Saskatchewan post-secondary program. Now that's the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important features of this budget is its sustainability. We only need to look to our neighbours to the south or to Ontario to realize the importance of living within our means and the financial devastation that is caused when a government does not.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had the NDP Finance critic enter into debate and had a few comments on what this budget meant, and he had feelings on the past election that just took place. And the Finance critic for the NDP was making light that, you know, people didn't vote for this budget; that people didn't vote for these initiatives, and what not. And I've just got a quick little list of things here such as the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship; the work that we're doing in seniors' affordability plan, with the seniors' income plan; or with the personal care home benefits. Also the NDP Finance critic missed out on the children's and youth affordability plan that we have, or the first-time homebuyers tax credits.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of great programs that we're introducing in this government, especially in health care. If you look at some of the improvements that we have in the surgical wait times, accessing doctors, the creation of the 20-person locum, these programs are going to help countless Saskatchewan residents. And unfortunately the Finance critic for the NDP has missed out on that. He's also missed out on the improvements for persons with disabilities. He's also missed out with improving the Saskatchewan parks. And, Mr. Speaker,

these things that I've spoke of shouldn't be new to the Finance critic for the NDP because they were all contained in our platform that we just ran on in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, if you would look back on how this province was a mere five years ago, we had the highest education property taxes in all of Canada. We had higher income taxes under the NDP. We had a seniors' income plan that wasn't touched for 16 years. So, Mr. Speaker, if you look at today and what this budget does for the province and for its people, one has to understand that this is what we promised to do in our campaign, that campaign which resulted in 49 Saskatchewan Party MLAs getting elected versus nine.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province understand that you need to live within one's means and keep the budget balanced so that we can keep Saskatchewan growing. On November 7, this province rejected the big tax-and-spend platform, rejected a \$5.5 billion increase in pipe dreams from the opposition. They voted for a growing Saskatchewan that lives within its means and manages its finances. This is the budget that Saskatchewan residents voted for last fall.

What Saskatchewan people didn't vote for was a \$5.5 billion in new spending. They didn't vote for the NDP debt, and they didn't vote for the NDP. Mr. Speaker, if this province wanted to follow the path of Greece or Ontario, they would have voted for them. In the past election, voters soundly voted for a party that delivers balanced budgets that are sustainable and that keeps the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the amendment and for a balanced, sustainable budget that grows the economy and keeps the Saskatchewan advantage. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to join in the debate of the budget this evening.

Mr. Speaker, before I get to my comments, I do want to, if I could, just in the last few minutes, recognize the great Weyburn Red Wings, Mr. Speaker. The Weyburn Red Wings just won game seven over the Melville Millionaires about 10 minutes ago. It was 2-0 I believe was the final score. And, Mr. Speaker, the Red Wings bring great pride to our city, Mr. Speaker. They'll go on to face Humboldt in the league finals, and I know the member of Humboldt is not looking forward to that, Mr. Speaker. But so just congratulations to them, most especially to the head coach, Dwight McMillan, who is in fact the uncle of the member from Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker. Dwight McMillan has been the coach of the Weyburn Red Wings I believe since 1972, Mr. Speaker. He was a player before that, so his involvement with the Red Wings has been quite long. So, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to them.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, the member from Canora-Pelly, in bringing down this budget. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, all members, not only those that work with the Minister of Finance on the Treasury Board that spent a great deal of time, Mr. Speaker, in going over proposals and budget submissions and

all the debates that I'm sure take place among that group, Mr. Speaker, but also the members of the government and the caucus members that have great input into this process, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, as saying my thank yous, I do want to thank my staff here in the building: Drew who is probably still working this evening, Krista, Kelly, and Trent, Mr. Speaker, who do a great job in my office here in the building, Mr. Speaker. As well I want to express my appreciation to Marcie, my constituency assistant, who is celebrating her 12th year as a constituency assistant, Mr. Speaker, working on behalf of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and she does a great job. As well Sheila who works in our office on a part-time basis and helps out a great deal, Mr. Speaker.

As well I want to, Mr. Speaker, because I don't believe I spoke on the Throne Speech debate last fall, Mr. Speaker, so I don't think I've had an opportunity publicly in this forum to thank the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy who have given me the great honour of returning to this place, Mr. Speaker, for a third time since 2006, Mr. Speaker. So I'm very appreciative to the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy and to the team that we all rely on to get re-elected or to get elected for the first time, Mr. Speaker.

We have a great deal of dedicated volunteers on my campaign team, Mr. Speaker. I can't name them all, but certainly Danette, Phil, Dale, Karen, Ross, just to name a few who worked so hard, Mr. Speaker, on this campaign.

[22:00]

You know, we always seek to, I guess, beat the best, Mr. Speaker. And in our constituency certainly, with one exception, going back about 100 years or about 90 years ago, without exception . . . Tommy Douglas, when you think of the Weyburn constituency, Premier Douglas, who served for a number of years in this House from a Weyburn constituency, received about sixty-two and a half per cent of the vote in his first election. That was about the high-water mark for him — 1944.

And we were very pleased. We set the bar at 63 per cent to obtain in this last election, and we were very pleased to receive 76 per cent of the vote, Mr. Speaker. And obviously, Mr. Speaker, none of us can do it on our own, and so I thank my constituents and my campaign team. And we're going to, I guess, have a bit of a celebration at our spring banquet, our annual spring banquet on Thursday, Mr. Speaker. And so thank you to all those people.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to just recognize, before I speak on the budget, just in the last few days, the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal recipients had been announced, Mr. Speaker. And from the city of Weyburn, one of the recipients this year, Mr. Speaker, from the city of Weyburn was Marlene Nedelcov, Mr. Speaker. Ms. Nedelcov was a long-time city councillor, a founding member and president of the urban parks association, one of the founding members behind the creation of the Tatagwa Parkway, a beautiful spot in Weyburn — a whole list, Mr. Speaker, of things that she dedicated her life to, Mr. Speaker. Sadly Marlene lost her battle to cancer in February, so she was actually awarded this posthumously just in the last couple of days, or her family was, Mr. Speaker. And I want to

just join with the people of Weyburn and area in thanking her for her service and honouring her life and her service, Mr. Speaker, on this award that is very well deserved, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very, very pleased to support this budget that was tabled by the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora-Pelly, Mr. Speaker. And I want to just touch on something that the Minister for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], the member from Lloydminster, talked about just earlier this evening when he talked about the issue of, well, is this a budget of prosperity or austerity, Mr. Speaker. And I think he touched, and I think he did a very good job of explaining in his remarks that it doesn't have to be an either/or proposition.

And when I think of this budget, Mr. Speaker, I think of people like my grandfather, Bob Tracey, who was a small-business man, Mr. Speaker, for many years worked for a number of different companies doing service work on whether it was building highways or doing work in the oil industry, Mr. Speaker, and then decided — after a lot of debate and I'm sure a lot of discussion around the kitchen table with my grandmother because they had a family, a young family at that time, Mr. Speaker — they decided that they were going to go into business on their own and essentially buy a piece of, one piece of equipment and try to make a go of it.

And I know in talking with my grandpa who lives in Weyburn today, Mr. Speaker, you know, Grandma served as the bookkeeper for the company, aside from her duties with Canada Post as the postmaster in the town of Halbrite, Mr. Speaker. And I know that, hearing stories from my grandpa, that he was essentially given a year by the bank. He could make a go of it. He was given a year, and either he was going to succeed or he was going to fail, Mr. Speaker, without any help from government, Mr. Speaker, basically by his own entrepreneurship and his own ingenuity, Mr. Speaker, and his own hard work. He basically was told by the bank he had a year to make a go of it or else, essentially like many stories that you hear in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that it was either going to be a working proposition or it wasn't, Mr. Speaker.

And I know, from talking and hearing stories from my grandfather, that issue of prosperity or austerity. I know as a small-business person that at the height of his business wasn't a big business. He employed for a number of years his youngest son, my uncle, Mr. Speaker, for a time when the oil patch was slow. Even his son-in-law, my dad, went to work for him for a few months just in order for my parents to be able to help make ends meet in a very difficult time during the lows of the oil cycle, Mr. Speaker.

But in that issue of austerity or prosperity, in a year that I'm sure was a good year for business in starting out, and after making a go of it, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that they thought not to go . . . And my grandparents didn't travel, and they didn't buy, you know, expensive vehicles when they had money, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure their thought was, we've had a good year. Let's make another payment on that piece of equipment. Let's make another payment on that welder that they had to purchase, Mr. Speaker.

And so I think that this issue of whether it's prosperity or

austerity, Mr. Speaker, is just a false premise put out by some people, members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that you have to make decisions to ensure stability going forward into the future. And I think that this budget, Mr. Speaker, does that. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a budget that keeps the Saskatchewan advantage because it keeps our budgets balanced, Mr. Speaker. It keeps spending sustainable. It keeps our economy growing strong and growing, Mr. Speaker, and it keeps our promises that we made as a political party in the last campaign, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in my time speaking tonight I'm going to talk, I just want to briefly touch a little bit about the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy and how this budget, I think, positively impacts the people that I have the pleasure of representing, Mr. Speaker. And then I'll talk a little bit about the areas of responsibility that I have a responsibility for, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, these are really exciting times, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing growth of the constituency and as a community that we haven't seen in a great, great many years, Mr. Speaker.

I remember, and I probably have told this story before, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity . . . In 2006 running in my first election — it was a by-election — and, Mr. Speaker, this was after a couple of years of being away from home, going to university here in Regina, and moving here, Mr. Speaker. And I remember in that first campaign going out and afterwards buying our home on 6th Street and being a part of the community again. And I remember, you know, going out for supper, Mr. Speaker, or going to the grocery store. And you would go, you know, we would go out, and you'd kind of recognize most people around town. You either knew who they were or you went to school with them or they were maybe a former teacher, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker. You go around the city of Weyburn or any part of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, and there are so many new people around. And I know that's the same for the member for Estevan and the member from Humboldt and the member from Cannington, Mr. Speaker — yourself, Mr. Speaker. There are so many new people in our communities, young families moving in, you know, Mr. Speaker.

We have a challenge, and I'll talk a little bit of challenge about housing, Mr. Speaker. But you know the one thing that we are doing in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency to deal with the challenge of housing is we're building houses, Mr. Speaker. And we're building apartment buildings, Mr. Speaker, and there's condominiums that are being developed, Mr. Speaker. And we know that there is more work to do, but we are seeing investment into the community of Weyburn and the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy that we haven't seen in a great long time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, in terms of the community, Mr. Speaker, there is a number of fundraising activities that are going on that relate not only to projects of the community but projects that the government is involved in. I know that there's a great fundraising effort on right now for what we call the Triple C Centre, Mr. Speaker. This is going to be a cultural centre for putting on different productions. And it's going to be

built within the high school, Mr. Speaker, where we're having a massive major renovation taking place at the high school that involves not only the high school, not only this community organization, which the community on this facility alone is going to raise approximately \$4 million towards the project, Mr. Speaker, and they're well on their way towards getting to their goal. As well as the community college, the part of it that's located in Weyburn, is going to be remaining a part of that facility, Mr. Speaker. So we have a great group of people that are involved in that fundraising organization.

The hospital foundation is up and running, Mr. Speaker, great dedicated people that are raising considerable dollars not only from the corporate community around Weyburn — there's been some significant donations, and I'll touch on those hopefully later in the spring session, Mr. Speaker, just to highlight some of those, Mr. Speaker — but the city of Weyburn is now going to put a levy on to raise money, as well as the local RMs in the area. I believe the RM of Weyburn has announced, I believe it's a \$1.25 million donation over a number of years towards that project. And so great work that's being done by that group.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have an organization called the Wor-Kin Shop that is affiliated with the SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] organizations. They're doing great work, Mr. Speaker, raising money. Our government has announced \$1 million towards the project of removing the people that are on a wait-list for day activity programming, Mr. Speaker. And they are doing a great job in raising money. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to see that work being done.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, in terms of education for the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, part of my constituency, we deal with three different school divisions. On the public side, it's South East Cornerstone, Mr. Speaker, that's going to see an increase in their budget this year. Prairie South, which is the public school division on the far west side including the community of Coronach, is going to see an increase. And Holy Family, which is the separate school division, will also see an increase, Mr. Speaker.

And all of those school divisions are doing great work, especially in terms of capital, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the capital dollars that this government is investing in not only the high school project in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, but also some changes that are being made to the configuration of grades at the separate school, Mr. Speaker, turning what we now have on the separate side, an elementary and a junior high system, they're going to merge those two together and bring them all into one building, Mr. Speaker. So this budget certainly invests considerable capital, considerable operating funds into those organizations as they work towards their future goals.

Mr. Speaker, I can't touch on my constituency or this budget without speaking of agriculture. And I want to join with members in not only thanking the Agriculture minister but also . . . well just thanking the Agriculture minister, Mr. Speaker. We're very fortunate in this government. The member from Melville, despite his team losing tonight to Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, the member from Melville has served this government so very well on behalf of rural residents, on behalf of producers, Mr. Speaker. And this is something that doesn't go unnoticed in my constituency where people certainly appreciate the work of

the Agriculture minister and seeing continued investment into agriculture by this government, the second largest agriculture budget in provincial history, Mr. Speaker, a record high \$174 per acre coverage in crop insurance, Mr. Speaker. That's up, that's more than doubled since 2007, Mr. Speaker.

And we look at what we're hearing from the other side when they talk about their priorities, Mr. Speaker. And where would they take money from, Mr. Speaker, to fund some of their priorities? Municipalities and agriculture, Mr. Speaker. That's something we've heard about before in this province's history and, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province don't have an interest in going back to those days.

Mr. Speaker, and I also would just mention that as well the option, Mr. Speaker, to purchase up to a \$100 per acre of coverage for unseeded acres. Mr. Speaker, this is certainly something that has affected my constituency and parts of this province, particularly the Southeast with the considerable amount of precipitation that we had in the last couple of years, the amount of snow that we had a couple years ago, Mr. Speaker. And so I would join the member from Moosomin that urged his constituents that maybe had been listening tonight to certainly consider their options when they look to their farm plan for this year in light of the decisions that have been made to increase the available coverage for unseeded acres, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at . . . So I touched on agriculture. In light of the Leader of the Opposition's comments as well, as municipalities was another area that he was talking about where he would take additional money. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you just from the . . . And not to go through all the communities in my constituency, but the one that I live in, the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, in the last budget year of the NDP government, \$830,000 in revenue sharing for the city of Weyburn. This year, Mr. Speaker, \$1.99 million, a 140 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, to revenue sharing in terms of what the community of Weyburn is going to see, Mr. Speaker.

And that goes, that's going to go a long way towards addressing not just their operating budget, Mr. Speaker. But the city of Weyburn, like many communities, need to look at their capital plan, Mr. Speaker, obviously as a growing community not only taking care of the infrastructure deficit that existed, Mr. Speaker, but also the work that needs to take place in the future. And so considerable more dollars are available for that, Mr. Speaker.

[22:15]

As well I mentioned housing, Mr. Speaker. I think that one of the things that has resonated very well in my constituency, I know it has in many, Mr. Speaker, is the program that is going to go towards a corporate income tax rebate for rental housing construction, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing, even before this announcement, Mr. Speaker, we have seen some movement in this area in terms of the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, some new units that are being built, not only the single-family dwellings, Mr. Speaker, but as well as some rental accommodations. And I've touched on a little bit of that. And this is one that both through the city and the chamber has received considerable attention and some positive responses,

Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Ministry of Environment, just to briefly, briefly touch on a couple of areas, that I'm very pleased that we are seeing additional dollars. Mr. Speaker, we've received, Ministry of Environment has received dollars, \$1 million this year for year 2 of what I hope is a five-year boreal water strategy, Mr. Speaker, something that the Finance minister was able to include in his budget speech.

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, what we want to do is, in light of concerns of what may or may not be happening to our pristine lakes in northern Saskatchewan because of developments in northern, particularly northern Alberta, Mr. Speaker, where an area that was largely abandoned by the former government in terms of proper environmental monitoring, Mr. Speaker, so we are going to continue year 2 of this program, Mr. Speaker. And some of the benefits of this in the last year, 227 northern lakes were sampled, Mr. Speaker, to identify acidification. Mr. Speaker, air quality was taken at 11 different locations in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to continue this work. And I think, I hope the public and members will see the benefit of the work that the Ministry of Environment will be doing in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I do also want to mention very briefly, you know, in every budget I think there are, you know, obviously the areas that get a lot of attention, and there's some that really don't get any attention. One of those in the Ministry of Environment would be \$4 million, Mr. Speaker, towards the IM [information management] transformation. And I know members or people that are listening to this speech may be wondering what that is, Mr. Speaker. This is changing our information management system within the Ministry of Environment to coincide with the changes that we're making in terms of moving towards a results-based regulatory framework.

Mr. Speaker, all that to say that this is nation-leading work that we're doing when it comes to regulating our environment, regulating development, Mr. Speaker, in this province. Moving towards a results-based system, Mr. Speaker, where we focus, put more focus, Mr. Speaker, on the high-risk activities, Mr. Speaker. We simplify and streamline the process for not only industry, municipalities, or individuals, Mr. Speaker. And so this infrastructure investment will go a long ways towards the permitting process, Mr. Speaker, moving that to an online permitting process and not only for our clients as a ministry, Mr. Speaker, but our ability as a ministry to track the progress of work that's being done in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and just finally I would just close, Mr. Speaker . . . I believe that's probably close to the end of my time, Mr. Speaker. I just not only want to . . . Because I didn't get an opportunity during the Throne Speech. I didn't get an opportunity to respond to that. But I want to publicly thank some people, Mr. Speaker, who I haven't already thanked.

First of all, I want to not only thank but congratulate all members of the House on their election last November. I haven't had a chance to do that in this forum, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been very fortunate through not only being elected but also being employed previous to my election by this group, Mr. Speaker. And although some of the faces and some

of the people have changed, Mr. Speaker, I just feel very fortunate to be associated with my colleagues and look forward to working with all the new members. We have great discussion and great debate. And we come from different perspectives and different backgrounds, and we have a little fun from time to time, Mr. Speaker, and so I'm very, very pleased to be with all of my colleagues. And so I want to extend my congratulations to all the members that were elected, re-elected, and elected for the first time, including members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my unending love and appreciation to my wife Amanda, Mr. Speaker, who is just the most wonderful person that I know, Mr. Speaker. This year will be our 13th wedding anniversary. And no, we didn't get married during recess, during the recess break, but almost, Mr. Speaker. But I just want to express my appreciation as all members do. We certainly couldn't do this without our family and the support of our families, Mr. Speaker. She is, as members on this side will know, clearly the more talented person in our household, Mr. Speaker. And I am just so very fortunate that she gives me the support and the patience and the understanding to do the work that I am so very honoured to do on behalf of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, on behalf of the province. And so with that, Mr. Speaker, my thanks to Amanda.

And I will be supporting the budget as it was presented by the Minister of Finance, and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by my friend from Regina Rosemont. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded very much of delivering probably the most important lecture of the semester to a group of grade 12 students at 3:25 on a Friday night before the May long weekend. Anyway I shall, I shall commence.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise in the House today and enter debate on the 2012-2013 provincial budget. A fiscally responsible budget, a balanced budget, a balanced budget on the general revenue side, and a balanced budget on the summary financial side. A budget that reflects promises made, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, a budget that reflects our guiding principles, principles that provide the foundation for the new Saskatchewan and a budget that maintains the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a minute to thank a few people. First of all I want to say thank you to my wife, Karen, who has supported me unequivocally along this journey. I'm sure the rules of the House don't permit me to say what she really said to me when I announced to her that I was going to embark on this journey. Nonetheless, nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, she has supported me throughout the campaign, throughout some difficulties in my life physically, and she's just been by my side the whole time. And it's been quite a journey and we've had quite a lot of fun. We've met an absolutely tremendous number of great people, great constituents. We've reacquainted ourselves with the long history of Regina Douglas Park and I couldn't be more proud to have been elected to represent the

people with whom I grew up.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize my sons Chris and Cam — my eldest son Chris is a welder on the pipeline working up in northern BC at the present time; my son Cam, a steam engineer working in the oil patch just outside of Saskatoon in Kerrobert — and my two daughters Michelle and Mel, and my grandson Benjamin.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know, the budget process is complicated, a process that engages many, many people, and I'd like to recognize a number of those people for the role they played in the development of this budget.

First, I'd like to recognize the constituents of Regina Douglas Park, constituents for whom this budget is all about, constituents who on the doorstep made it abundantly clear with a substantial majority that they were not in favour of the old Saskatchewan and that they were not in favour of the wild spending promises of the opposition. The constituents of Douglas Park made it abundantly clear, Mr. Speaker, that they were looking for responsibility. They told us, Mr. Speaker, that they were looking for vision. They were looking for leadership, and, Mr. Speaker, they wanted realism — realistic promises, realistic spending, realistic ideas, realistic outcomes, and I could go on.

Mr. Speaker, this budget corresponds directly with what I was told on the doorstep and, Mr. Speaker, this is the way it should be. And, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand before you and be able to speak with every confidence about the direction we are headed and the role the budget will play in getting us there. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that the architects of this budget recognized my constituents' direction and used the confidence that our constituents showed in us to craft a budget that respects that input, that respects what has been provided them by the people. So to my constituents in Regina Douglas Park, I thank you.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my constituency assistant, Becky Mason, for all that she has done to get the constituency office of Regina Douglas Park up and running. Thank you, Becky. And so, Becky, on behalf of our constituents, myself, and my family, again I want to thank you.

To the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, an individual who has worked tirelessly and unselfishly on behalf of the people of this province for many years, and to his team, and on behalf of the constituency of Regina Douglas Park, I thank you, Mr. Minister. To the dedicated, committed, diligent, and tireless work of the Treasury Board and on behalf of all the Regina Douglas Park constituents, I thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we are confident. We have a vision. We have a plan and we have a leader that stands up for Saskatchewan. He's proud of Saskatchewan and he's not afraid to let the world know. Mr. Speaker, this is serious work and all those mentioned deserve serious recognition for a job well done.

Eleven billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, \$11 billion is not chump change and the people in this province expect due diligence and trust, that all due respect be given to the task at hand. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget and the process to derive it reflects all of

that.

Mr. Speaker, principles mean everything to me, and I believe they mean everything to everyone in this Assembly. And so as I look at this budget, the product of a very intensive, collaborative, consultative, and democratic process, I looked at it in terms of our guiding principles. And I looked at it as to its adherence to those principles and to common sense, realistic priorities that I heard on the doorstep.

Mr. Speaker, economic growth and job creation through the private sector, not government as the engine of the economy, is a principle that drives this government. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy continues to lead the nation. Our debt is lower. Our provincial finances are sound. Our debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio is the second lowest in Canada. In 2011 the Saskatchewan economy grew by 3.6 per cent real GDP. This year, 2012, we are forecasting real economic growth of 2.8 per cent. Saskatchewan's unemployment rate is 5 per cent, lowest in the country. There are, as of today, 11,194 jobs posted on the Saskatchewan Jobs website. Personal income tax revenues are expected to increase, which is another indication of growth. And our population is at an all-time high. Mr. Speaker, tough to argue our record on economic growth and job creation.

A second principle, Mr. Speaker: smaller, less intrusive, and more efficient government. Mr. Speaker, our workforce adjustment strategy will continue. Lean principles and efficiencies, reducing bureaucratic red tape to enhance small business is another example of our common sense approach that is readily understood and obviously supported by our constituents. Steady, gradual reduction in government spending and taxation while maintaining a firm commitment to the balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, the end of the 2012-13 budget will see no increase in the provincial debt. We will be able to keep our election promises with realistic spending and not increase our debt. Mr. Speaker, we are the only province in the Dominion that has presented so far a balanced budget to the electorate. And, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Applause]

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand behind that kind of commitment and that kind of respect. It's another indicator to me of what we say we will do, we do.

Mr. Speaker, our guiding principles speak to a high quality health care system . . .

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of 10:30, this Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bob Bjornerud
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
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Minister Responsible for The Global
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